AGNES REPPLIER: SOCIAL CRITIC

By

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AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Agnes Repplier: Social Critic

The purpose of this thesis is to establish Agnes Repplier as a social critic. Previous estimates of her work have tended to emphasize her literary proficiency and to exclude her contemporary observations of the American scene.

The procedure followed consisted in an examination of Miss Repplier's contributions to Life, the former satirical weekly, published from January, 1883, to November, 1936. In round numbers these essays are two hundred. Miss Repplier's contributions began in 1893 and continued until 1925.

Chapter I, "The Introduction," limits the scope of the study and points out that such an investigation will yield three things: first, that as a social critic Miss Repplier's work now constitutes a primary source as a gauge of the conservative temper of her time; second, that she was the last and greatest American exemplar of the genuine essay as distinguished from the article; third, that while seldom touching explicitly upon Catholic themes, she nevertheless brought the message of Catholic wisdom, combined with exquisite art, before the modern world.

Chapter II, entitled "Life," is a brief history of the weekly, given in order to establish the temper of Miss Repplier's writing. Throughout its era Life was noted as an outstanding organ of social satire.

Chapter III, "Social and Political Views," is set against the background of Mark Sullivan's Our Times and attempts to point out, not only Miss Repplier's vital concern, but also her interest in the amelioration of the many dislocations that beset the United States of America from 1900-1925.

Chapter IV, "Education," traces Miss Repplier's reaction against the excesses and defects of Pragmatism in its application to educational theories.

Chapter V, "Woman's Sphere," traces, through the eyes of Miss Repplier, the history of the feminist movement from 1898 up to its successful culmination in women franchise.

Chapter VI, entitled "The Color of Life," deals with Miss Repplier's comments anent the varied and lighter aspects of the passing American scene. It includes such topics as modern inventions, the observance of national holidays, and literary and dramatic achievements.

Chapter VIII, "The Conclusion," is an assessment of the entire study. It includes also biographical data of Miss Repplier not found elsewhere in this study and evaluates her literary reputation.

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FOR MOTHER MARY GERALD BARRY, O. P.

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PREFACE

My first acknowledgment is to Mother Mary Gerald Barry, O.P., Prioress General of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, Adrian, Michigan. I am grateful to Mother Mary Gerald for the privilege that has been mine in pursuing graduate study at Michigan State University and for the opportunity of making this investigation of Miss Repplier's work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agnes Repplier was a minor writer and no critic was ever more aware of her role than she was. "My niche may be very small," she once wrote, "but I made it by myself."[1]

The present study does not seek to refute this estimate. What it does intend to do, is to show that she was an important writer, and this for three reasons: (1) As a social critic her work constitutes a primary source as a gauge of the conservative temper of her time. (For the wry reader, this point of view, however conservative, was never dull.) (2) She was, as Kunitz and Haycraft point out in Twentieth Century Authors, "the last American exemplar of the genuine essay as distinguished from the article."[2] And (3) while seldom touching explicitly upon Catholic themes, she nevertheless brought the message of Catholic wisdom, combined with exquisite art, before the modern world. "In her Catholicism she stood clear of contemporary American adjuncts: a kind of ghetto complex and the worst artistic taste since Prussian baroque."[3] This study will consider her position as a social critic.

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[1]George Stewart Stokes, Agnes Repplier: Lady of Letters, 1.

[2]Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors, 1611.

[3]Francis Sweeney, S. J., "Miss Repplier of Philadelphia," The Catholic World, CLXXIII (July, 1951), 281.

The scope of this study will be limited, for the most part, to an analysis of the essays written by Miss Repplier for Life, the former satirical weekly, published from January 1883 to November 1936. Her contributions began in 1893 and ended in 1925. During this period she wrote approximately two hundred articles for this weekly.

At the present time some of these still remain uncollected. However, through the cooperation of Mr. James Sweet of the Library of Congress and the generosity of Mr. Edward Garvey of Chicago, most of them are now in my possession.

Literary critics, often overlooking these "bread and butter pieces," as indeed did Miss Repplier herself, have tended in general to select as more representative Miss Repplier's longer and more scholarly essays; for example, those which made their appearance in The Atlantic Monthly or Harper's Weekly. Early in her career she began to collect and publish in book form those of her essays which pleased her most. Mary Ellen Chase recalls this fondness for her own writing in her record of an interview held some twenty years ago with the author. "She gave me tea in her library and charmed me by saying that she loved and read her own books! I have never met a more acute or charming mind."[4]

These volumes of essays are seventeen in number and have been evaluated by Mr. George Stokes of Temple University in his doctoral dissertation which is on deposit at the University of Pennsylvania. A more informal presentation is available in his biographical sketch entitled Agnes Repplier, published in 1949. I am grateful to Mr. Stokes for his excellent bibliography.

These longer essays, often the fruition of the shorter ones,

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[4]In a letter from Mary Ellen Chase of October 28, 1956.

which Miss Repplier wrote for Life, have been appraised primarily for the excellence of their literary precision, and have earned for their author the title of "Dean of American Essayists." She herself once said that every sentence was a matter of supreme importance to her, and Francis Sweeney, S. J., has confirmed this.

> She held her phrases in her hand like semi-precious jewels, letting the sunlight engage fleck and flaw. She utilized the resources of language without embarrassment, holding her course midway between a skittish fear of the commonplace and weakness for the fossilized bon-mot. She never stuffed a fuzzy idea into the mold of a cliche. It was an exacting genre, this summoning of a thought, a comment on loss or change, a comparison of old ways and new, casting it like a stone into the pool of history and surrounding it with the widening circles of incident. Agnes Repplier was a raconteur straight out of Augustan times. It was her method of measuring the present on the yardstick of the past for it is with the help of history, she wrote, "that we balance our mental accounts."[5]

However, ironically enough, it was these same essays which led unsympathetic critics to insist that her work was often more English than American. (Were these critics aware of her contributions to Life, or is their critical estimate based on impartial evidence?)

As early as 1888 critics such as Brander Matthews began to consign Miss Repplier to the role of a Victorian spinster and to place her in the English literary tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century.[6] Unfortunately, this view has been the most influential and long lasting. Even though Van Wyck Brooks in The Confident Years dissents, his own opinion, which will be discussed later, also seems to be very wide of the mark and hardly less subjective:

> She [Agnes Repplier] had published her first collection of essays, and Matthews, a stickler for Americanism, observed that her loyalty

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[5]Sweeney, op. cit., 283.

[6]The term Americanism is not to be understood in its narrower, linguistic sense, but in its cultural meaning.

> to British authors embraced even the third-rate while she totally ignored the first rate in her own country.[7]

Needless to say, the indictment was premature (the author was not yet 30) and certainly it was unwarranted. A careful scrutiny of the American magazines of that era reveals that they all catered, at least in some measure, to European interests and tastes. Furthermore, a preference for English and continental writers was a predominant note in the Belles-Lettres of this period. In 1881, the year which was marked for Miss Repplier by the first acceptance of her work for publication, the editor, J. G. Holland of Scribner's, one of America's then outstanding periodicals, admonished his staff:

> All Americans are by nature "Passionate Pilgrims"....The Old World is a lodestone that is always drawing them to it....An American magazine...must, if it wishes to keep its hold on the public attention at home, satisfy the appetite of its readers for knowledge of past and present of the Old World.[8]

Father Hecker, founder of The Catholic World, advised Agnes, the young neophyte, in that same year, on what to write in an interview which is now familiar enough to most readers to be considered an anecdote. She recorded it thus:

> The first cheque for fifty dollars that I ever received (and a lordly sum it seemed) came from The Catholic World (1881) for a story which I am inclined to think now (1909) was not worth money. The first criticism I ever wrote was an essay on Mr. Ruskin (how many years has it been since essays on Ruskin had a market?) which was undertaken on the advice of Father Hecker and was also published in The Catholic World...."What author do you read most?" (he had asked). I told him, "Ruskin;" an answer which nine out of ten studious girls would have given at that date.
>
> "Then," said he, "write me something about Ruskin, and make it it brief."

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[7]Brooks, The Confident Years: 1885-1915, 32.

[8]Holland, "Passionate Pilgrims," Scribner's Monthly, XXII (May, 1881), 146.

That essay turned my feet into the path which I have trod laboriously ever since.[9]

Van Wyck Brooks admits that this colonial note to which Matthews objected in her writing grew less apparent as time went on, but writing as late as 1938 he himself placed her in that staid, static, cultivated Philadelphian society which he felt had belonged to an "Anglo-Saxon World."

> ...it had no instinctive part or lot in the rising American intellectual life that was largely democratic...the old English culture survived in force under the surface of the national life, untroubled by the vital currents that flowed over and about it, and home-loving Americans who were whole-hearted in every other way could remain entirely English in the texture of their minds. They could maintain a literary life that was in America but no more of it than if it were actually lived in the British Isles, though they had to pay the penalty of all colonials when they wrote, for colonial writers fall between two stools. They are seldom remembered in the mother-country, where they are as alien as anyone else, and having a somewhat evasive relation to the life of their own country people, they are read by an ever-diminishing public at home. Of these writers, Agnes Repplier was in certain ways the type.[10]

Miss Repplier's own personal view written for The Atlantic Monthly is pertinent here. In 1916 in an essay, she made a plea for the right interpretation and employment of the term "Americanism." The essay is as timely today as it was then, even though the portion given below is quoted primarily for its historical accuracy.

> The expansion of national life, fed by the great emotions of the Civil War, and revealed to the world by the Centennial Exhibition, (1893) found expression in education, art and letters. Then it was that Americanism took a new and disconcerting turn - Pleased with our progress, stunned by finding that we had poets, and printers and novelists, and magazines, and a history, all of our own, we began to say, and say very loudly, that we had no need of the poets, and painters, and novelists and magazines, and histories of other lands....So far had American patriotism encroached upon matters of

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[9]Repplier, "Catholicism and Authorship," The Catholic World, XC (November, 1909), 173.

[10]Brooks, op. cit., 33.

taste, that by 1892 there was a critical embargo placed upon foreign literature. "Every nation," we were told, "ought to supply its own second-rate books," like domestic sheeting and ginghams. An acquaintance with English authors was held to be a misdemeanour. Why quote Mr. Matthew Arnold, when you might quote Mr. Lowell? Why write about Becky Sharp, when you might write about Hester Prynne? Why laugh over Dickens, when you might laugh over Mark Twain? Why eat artichokes, when you might eat corn? American schoolboys, we were told, must be guarded from the feudalism of Scott. American speech must be guarded from the insularities of England's English. "That failure in good sense which comes from too warm a self satisfaction" (Mr. Arnold does sometimes say a thing very well) robbed us for years of mental poise, of adjusted standards, of an unencumbered outlook upon life.[11]

Another judgment of Miss Repplier is to be found in Twentieth Century Authors:

Because of the era of her youth, and because she was an intimate of men older than herself - Oliver Wendell Holmes, first of all - she has been in the past grouped with such innocuous writers of familiar essays as Henry Van Dyke, and Hamilton Wright Mabie. She does not belong in their company; she does not condescend to her readers, she does not "date"...Mason Wade praised her "very real gifts of style, wit, wisdom, and urbane tolerance. Add to these the gayety which is the obverse of a natural melancholy, forthrightness, and insistence on "going her own way" in solitude, and one has the background of the making of some of the most polished and brilliant essays in English....A scholarly intelligence is warmed in her works by a delightful informality and an insatiable interest in life.[12]

Agreeing with this latter statement that Miss Repplier's work betrays "an insatiable interest in life," I shall attempt to establish, on the basis of her contributions to Life mentioned earlier, that she was primarily a social critic, interested in the contemporary American scene and contemporary Americans, and that, moreover, her work manifested a contemporary American, albeit conservative, point of view.

In order to do this it will be necessary to give a brief history

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[11]Repplier, "Americanism," Counter-Currents, 268.

[12]Kunitz and Haycraft, op. cit., 1612.

of the former Life magazine to which she contributed, in round numbers, two hundred essays.

The only available source is the article by Frank Luther Mott, to whom I am greatly indebted not only for the use of his material but also for his encouragement in the development of this topic.

After I have clearly established the scope and nature of this magazine, I shall in ensuing chapters treat in detail several of the more salient issues with which the weekly concerned itself, and which were discussed in its pages by Miss Repplier. These include political and social issues, education, feminism, and contemporary morals and manners.

CHAPTER II

LIFE

Life was born in 1883 as a weekly in the Broadway studio of a New York artist, John Ames Mitchell.[1]

Although Punch and Judge were already well established, Mitchell felt that a field was open for a light satirical weekly and he was willing to risk a $10,000 legacy in the project.

Seeking a partner who would attend to the literary side of the weekly, while he devoted himself to its art, Mitchell finally discovered Edward Sanford Martin who had been the founder of the Harvard Lampoon. Another Harvard Man, Andrew Miller, joined them as business manager. Arrangements were completed for quarter interests, and plans went forward. After much difficulty the Gillia Brothers were secured as partners.

Volume one, number one of the new weekly set forth its principles and policies.

> We wish to have some fun in this paper. ...We shall try to domesticate as much as possible of the casual cheerfulness that is drifting about in an unfriendly world. ...We shall have something to say about religion, about politics, fashion, society, literature, the stage, the stock exchange, and the police station, and we will speak out what is in our mind as fairly as we know how.[2]

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[1]Frank Luther Mott, "Fifty Years of Life: The Story of a Satirical Weekly," Journalism Quarterly, XXV (September, 1948), 224-232.

[2]Time, "Life: Dead and Alive," October 19, 1936, 61.

Throughout its early years Life distinguished itself through the editorship of Mitchell, who often wrote impulsive, quixotic, but always warm-hearted editorials about his favorite crusades. Among these were opposition to vivisection, vaccination, heckling attacks at J. P. Morgan, Sr., and John D. Rockefeller, satirical thrusts against hobble skirts, the closing of the Metropolitan Museum on Sundays, marriage of U. S. girls to foreign fortune-hunters, and loveless marriages in general.

For months the brave little weekly was ignored by the public. Gradually, however, the circulation increased until in September of its first year, it reached a point of where it broke even financially. "Life, the new comic paper, is real, Life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal," so prophesied the kindly Critic. By the second year Life had reached the 20,000 mark.

Shortly after this first success, Martin was forced to retire because of poor health, leaving Mitchell and Miller partners. They secured Henry Guy Carleton who became famous through his clever Negro and poker sketches. Carleton stayed on until John Kendrick Bangs was available in the spring of 1884. After Bang's arrival Life began to flourish. Its circulation continued to increase. The little weekly was soon well-known, and distinguished artists and writers eagerly contributed to it. Bangs, himself, proved to be not only an able and responsible editor but a brilliant writer as well. He produced editorials, long and short pieces of prose and verse, and conducted the often quoted "By the Way" page.

During the eighties and nineties Life acquired a quality distinct from any other publication of its day.

Frank Luther Mott summarized it well, when he said:

It was a wedding of delicacy to force that made the Life of the

> eighties and nineties the distinctive magazine that it was...it had something of what Meredith called "the comic spirit" - "the silvery laughter of the mind." It had standards and backgrounds and culture which its predecessors and contemporaries wot not of...the paper kept abreast of current events, of developments in morals and manners, of politics, of drama, literature and the arts.[3]

The weekly showed particular interest in the arts and manners exhibited in the Exposition at Chicago in 1893. It maintained a constant testimony against the Prohibitionists and always displayed strong anti-Semitic feelings.

It refused partisan allegiance in political issues but it had its favorite leaders and its principles. For example it never ceased to harass the Republican Party about the protective tariff. The little weekly also took delight in poking fun at Boston and in stirring up a pretty quarrel with Dana and the Sun. It satirized Ward McAllister and his "four hundred" along with all "dudes" and Anglomaniacs, and it hammered at Ben Butler.

In a gentler manner Life ridiculed the flirtatious summer girl, the vagaries of the rich, the expensiveness of marriage, the Thomas Street Poker Club, Calf-love, and the wistful humors of the poor. In 1887 Mitchell instituted a Fresh Air Fund which annually sent thousands of children from the slums to the country each summer.

In that same year Charles Dana Gibson introduced his famous Gibson girl, "shining like a bride," to the readers of Life and for the next twenty years she was an American favorite.

During the Wall Street panic of 1907 the magazine continued its circulation of 65,000.

In the following decade the newly arrived automobile provided a

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[3]Mott, op. cit., 229.

great boon to artists and writers.

By 1914, Life was the most successful ten-cent weekly on the market.

Then came the World War. Ardent Francophiles, Repplier, Mitchell, and Gibson took it as a personal affront when Germany invaded Belgium.

Ignoring neutrality, Gibson savagely depicted the Kaiser as a bloody, wild, boor insulting Uncle Sam, sneering at War Cripples, and shooting Red Cross Nurses. It was his personal belief that humor was the only way in the world to kill war, envy, spite and ignorances, but the Germans, he felt, lacked this quality. "Der Tag" had dawned with its brutal attack of the strong on the weak. Poison gas, unrestrictive submarine warfare--one alienating desperate German expedient followed another. Gibson rose in righteous wrath. No cartoonist ever drew a prouder or grander Uncle Sam than did Gibson--tall, stalwart, muscular, in his starry coat and striped breeches, a figure of homely, Lincolnesque dignity.

By 1916 the only trouble with this venerable old gentleman, according to Life was his lack of decision to fight. However, "Not so deaf as he used to be" read the caption of the Gibson cover on the "Lusitania" number of Life which showed Columbia pointing to the sinking liner while she spoke earnestly into the ear of Uncle Sam whose face was darkening with anger.

In another picture the lonely lady offered him the musical score of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and asked, "Has he forgotten how to sing it?" In a third drawing she gave him an eye examination and asked him to read the last line which read "Preparation."

But often sentiment gave way to savage satire when Gibson portrayed

the German leaders.

Sternly he marched the German war lords across his drawing board at the pen's point. Ludendorff, cold and ruthless; Hindenburg, heavy-featured and gross; the Crown-Prince, with a thin, cruel hauteur; and the Kaiser, hollow-eyed and despicable, with cringing bravado, his hands bloody; the mark of Cain upon his forehead. "Democracy" with a smashing right to the jaw knocked him into an open grave.

Life welcomed the stirring Gibson pictures with open pages. Nothing was more acceptable to Agnes Repplier or editor Mitchell who lived just long enough to see Life's last great Crusade victorious in the U. S. declaration of War in 1917. With a thrill of exaltation, evident in every line, Gibson drew a proud Liberty with her head held high, bearing her torch like a banner, while Columbia waded into the Atlantic towing the American fleet and leading her khaki-clad legions into battle toward victory.

After the war years Gibson bought Life and the little weekly resumed its peace-time pursuits.

Motion pictures became a serious and important department conducted by Robert E. Sherwood who became editor in 1924. Another addition was Ring Lardner who wrote the new Neighborhood News Column which contained personal gossip from various cities, written after the manner of the old style country newspaper. Walter Winchell's "Along the Main Stem" was also a gossip page.

However, Life's most spectacular feature was its nomination of Will Rogers for President in 1928.

By this time the magazine decidedly had more variety than formerly, but it had lost its original isolated distinctiveness.

Norman Anthony, former editor of Judge, became the editor of Life in 1929, and under him a new Life kicked up its heels, forgetful of the old delicacy, and not averse to a bit of ribaldry now and then.

Between 1929 and 1932 the weekly once more became a crusader against Prohibition. But by 1933 the little weekly had several competitors, The New Yorker and Esquire led the field, setting the pace for the "New Humor" and crude periodicals such as Ballyhoo and Hooey with their backhouse atmosphere at a later date.

In 1936, with its November issue in the press, Life decided to give up the battle.

It turned over its subscription list to Judge and sold its name to Time, Inc., which was then launching a new picture magazine.

For Life's final issue in its original vein, Edward Sanford Martin, then 80, was recalled from editorial retirement to compose its obituary. He wrote,

> That Life should be passing into the hands of new owners and directors is of the liveliest interest to the sole survivor of the little group that saw it born at 1115 Broadway in January, 1883.... As for me, I wish it all good fortune, grace, mercy and peace and usefulness to a distracted world that does not know which way to turn nor what will happen to it next. A wonderful time for a new voice to make a noise that needs to be heard.[4]

Miss Repplier's initial contribution to the famous weekly was made during the famous decade of the 1890's. With shrewd business acumen, the first essay she submitted was one on the favorite crusade of the editor--vivisection. Her approach was unique, with one decisive blow she used the stiletto of her pen to maim not only the advocates of the new science, but the advocates of progressive education--a topic she

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[4]Time, op. cit., 63.

never tired of lambasting.

However, there were also other persistent and significant contemporary forces at work which made the times ripe for criticism, and it was to these issues, which loomed so largely on the American scene, that Miss Repplier turned her attention and a facile pen.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VIEWS

Mark Sullivan, in Our Times, has pointed out several of the important causes that gave rise to that social and political turmoil which began during the early nineties and continued to gather momentum until about 1914, the period when Agnes Repplier was writing her most significant essays of social criticism for Life.[1]

The first of these contributory factors mentioned by Mr. Sullivan as a gauge of the social unrest was the termination of free land that for a hundred years had been the outlet for ambition and restlessness. So long as the land had been available the common man had the opportunity to create his own prosperity, but with its ultimate decline, there was an exploitation not only of natural resources but of labor as well, by the owners of wealth. The common man became the victim of aggrandizement in industry and politics. And what is more, he was locked in an iron vise by the rise of the monopolies and trusts.

A second danger closely related to the closing of the frontier was the possible depletion of our natural resources as a consequence of the exploitation of them by those who controlled the nation's wealth. But fortunately this danger was averted later by Theodore Roosevelt's wise policy of conservation.

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[1]Mark Sullivan, Our Times, I: The Turn of the Century, 149.

The increase of population, especially by the large waves of immigration that continued to come, especially after the exhaustion of free land, created a further grave peril. These immigrations which began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and lasted until their restriction by an Act of Congress in 1924, were marked by a heavy flow from the south and east of Europe, from Latin and Slavic countries and from Hebrew centers. They represented a change in the fundamental composition of the American stock and caused a great deal of apprehension and doubt in the minds of the American people at that time about the desirability of becoming the "melting pot" of the world.

The decision of the American people to restrict the number from each country to two per cent of the natives of that country already in America in 1890, was put into effect by Congress with the intention of exercising a deliberate control over the additions to their stock and to keep those additions in conformity to the proportions already here by attempting to maintain the degree of homogeneity already existing. As in the case of Johnny Chinaman in the preceding century, the attitude once more became "Immerky fur Immerkens, be jabers."

Mark Sullivan believes that this decision may reasonably be called the most far-reaching change that occurred in America during the first quarter of the century because it went to the roots of the composition of the people.[2]

Agnes Repplier's view conformed to that of the general opinion of the day for substantially the same reason--a refusal by many of these immigrants to be absorbed into American society.

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[2]Cf., Sullivan, ibid., 376.

Several essays state her position clearly and their substance can be gleaned from the following selection.

> Enthusiastic promoters of the "National Americanization Committee" --a crusade full of promise for the future--have talked to us so much and so sternly about our duty to the immigrant, our neglect of the immigrant, our debt to the immigrant, that we have been no less humiliated than bewildered by their eloquence. Mr. Roosevelt alone, of all their orators, has had the hardihood to say bluntly that citizenship implies service as well as protection...and that all who seek the franchise should be compelled to accept without demur our laws, our language, our national policy, our requisitions, civil and military....It behooves the men and women who have been well received, and who have responded ably to the opportunities offered them by our country's superb liberality, to be a little more lenient of our shortcomings. We confess them readily enough; but we feel that those whom we have befriended should not be the ones to dwell on them.[3]

Aside from the serious problem of assimilation, the immigrants created still another hazard, this time along economic lines. Their vast influx was out of proportion to the slow increase in the gold supply. The volume of currency was cut in half, and there was an immense increase in the production of the silver mines which exceeded both the increase in population and the trickling increase in the gold supply.

A proposal in 1894, not directly within the field of currency and government finance, but related to it, was the "graduated income tax" engineered by the farmers of the West and South, many of them immigrants, whose argument was expressed in the platform of one of the third parties: "A graduated income tax is the most equitable system of taxation, placing the burden of government upon those who can best afford to pay, instead of laying it upon the farmers and producers and exempting millionaire bondholders and corporations."[4] After the measure became law, test cases to determine its constitutionality were brought before the Supreme Court.

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[3]Repplier, "The Modest Immigrant," loc. cit., 226.

[4]Sullivan, op. cit., 172.

The Court, after two hearings, declared the law unconstitutional on May 20, 1895, by a five to four decision. The invalidation was fresh fuel to the popular discontent which flamed up in the shape of the Bryan campaign one year later.

Agnes Repplier was in no way a supporter of the silver-tongued orator.

> Then there is Mr. William Jennings Bryan. He knows all about his own brand of Democracy, a very particular brand given to the world in 1896, as rich in sentiment and sonorous phrases as it is indigent in sense and meaning. Its popularity was so great that it enabled its expositor to be twice defeated for the presidency.[5]

She was quick to discern that he was not a profound thinker, and her main objection to the man was not so much against the things he represented (except perhaps popular rule), but rather against his undisguised ambition and his iron-clad determination to become president, in spite of his obvious limitations.

Nevertheless, she was always non-partisan enough to follow freely what she held to be the right course, in spite of her membership in the Republican Party.

George Stokes relates that Roosevelt once told her, "You're no good as a partisan for you never go the whole way."[6] In this case, like Bryan, she felt the keen injustice of such measures as the income tax and the protective tariff supported by Republican Party leaders, and she denounced them soundly.

In one of George Birmingham's ingenious stories an American mag-

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[5]Repplier, "Our Counsellors," Life, LXXX (August 24, 1922), 5. (All other references to Miss Repplier's essays appearing in Life will be indicated without the title of the publication.)

[6]Stokes, op. cit., 168.

> nate, kind, clever and corrupt, gives it as his opinion that a titled aristocracy is a great safeguard to a country. Party leaders, he points out, must make some return for the money which has been spent on them; and it is better and cheaper to grant titles than to alter tariffs.
>
> There is a good deal to be said for this undemocratic point of view. A few new American baronets with every change of administration, or even an added earl or two, with ancestral acres in Oklahoma, would cost the taxpayer nothing; whereas a new tariff, if it is to be really profitable to its promoters, may so increase the cost of living as to make it a trifle difficult for some of us to live.
>
> To be supported by the tax list is the laudable ambition of every free-born American. The soldier clamors for a bonus, the engine-driver for nationalized railroads, the seaman for a subsidized merchant marine, the farmer for especial legislation, the manufacturer for a protective tariff.
>
> The great principle of running a business at a loss, and letting the taxpayer make up the deficit, is the dream of the wage-earner who regards the public revenue as a sort of manna upon which he has a sacred right to feed....
>
> And between two predatory armies moves apprehensively the lean citizen who pays for all....[7]

Like all the rest of America, Miss Repplier knew that "the patriots of the ticker," were forced to protect their investments by exerting a decisive influence in politics, by subsidizing candidates and parties, and by buying legislation. And so for them she reserved a special brand of asperity. It was mainly on the point of appropriating public wealth that she condemned philanthropy and the autonomy of money as it was preached by Carnegie, Astor, and the other "High Priests" of the new gospel of wealth doctrine. Such heresies she recognized as being diametrically opposed to the ideal of that very democracy which made possible their existence.

When the Laymen's Missionary Movement announced the cheering news that the world would be evangelized in twenty-five years, "or at the longest within a generation," Miss Repplier took occasion to remark

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[7]Repplier, "Titles or Tariffs," LXXVIII (September 1, 1921), 13.

> Several millionaires and scores of prominent business men are interested, and to millionaires and business men Heaven is not likely to refuse its aid....
>
> The records of history show how full of promise is this business-like scheme of evangelization. It was the assured wealth, the sound financial standing of the Apostles which gave them their astonishing success, and every great religious movement the world has witnessed since has rested on the same secure foundation. The acute business sense, the admirable acquisitiveness of St. Francis of Assisi quickened the hearts of men. Charles Wesley was enabled by the aid of millionaires and public dinners to evangelize the length and breadth of England. There can be no reasonable doubt that the "Laymen's Missionary Movement," if strongly financed, will at least, as its stockholders claim, give to the people of all lands "an opportunity of knowing what Christianity stands for."
>
> It will, alas! It will.[8]

A year later in an essay entitled "Our Beacon Lights," she denounced the "Literature of Success" by noting that the hagiologists of wealth were now assuming the same tone which the hagiologists of the Church had once used to encourage Christians to imitate the examples of the Saints. "We cannot," wrote a devout worshipper of Mr. Vanderbilt, "all follow in the lead of this great railway monarch, but in our own sphere, and in our own circumstances, we can pursue his general methods."[9]

Unfortunately, this aristocracy of Power did not culminate in that culture which we are usually wont to associate with the possessors of great wealth and nowhere was it betrayed so concretely as in the architectural vagaries of the day.

Louis Sullivan, whose Transportation Building had aroused excited admiration at the World's Fair in 1893, saw more clearly than any architect this connection between architecture and society and his interpretation of the functional character of architecture was not flattering to the new "lords" of industry. He observed somewhat acrimoniously that the

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[8]Repplier, "Foundations of Faith," XXXIX (February 18, 1907), 303.

[9]Repplier, "Our Beacon Lights," LI (January 23, 1908), 94.

unhappy, irrational, heedless, pessimistic, unlovely, distracted, and decadent structures which make up the great bulk of our contemporaneous architecture, point with infallible accuracy to qualities in the heart and mind and soul of the American people.

The error, as Miss Repplier saw it, was one of passive imitation, and importation with assimilation.

> It is an ornate age in which we live, and the aesthetic American architect has spared us nothing in the way of decoration....He has put a little bit of Venice in Boston, a little of Seville in Chicago. He has rebuilt Windsor Castle, and the Doge's Palace, and the Alhambra for the benefit of American millionaires. He has laid out Spanish gardens on the chill New England coast, and has erected frowning Norman keep to guard the peaceful tennis courts of Pennsylvania. And he has promised to remodel West Point into a faithful resemblance of a robber fortress on the Rhine....What is the startled pedestrian to think when he sees the lilies of France neatly carved over the lintel of one house, the lion of Norway over a second, and---save the mark-------the Papal keys over a third? Have these devices no connection in the architect's mind with kingdoms and with creeds, and do the tenants fancy them to be pretty improvisations on the part of the stone-cutter? Think of a devout Presbyterian or a good hard-shell Baptist sleeping nightly behind the protection of St. Peter's keys; of a fat Teuton flaunting the fleur-de-lis....Why go so far afield to search for what we do not need?[10]

It was, indeed, a strange new American scene and the very sight of it engendered a strange new American patriotism. Mr. Dooley, for one, the congenial contemporary of Miss Repplier's, was completely bewildered: "Manny people'd rather be kilt at Newport thin at Bunker Hill," he thoughtfully observed.

However, a more direct attack on this absence of culture is to be found in Miss Repplier's review of an essay she had read in a leading English periodical by a very earnest gentleman who came forward to point out the disadvantages of education:

He does us Americans the somewhat doubtful honor of drawing most

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[10]Repplier, "Architectural Vagaries," XXXXV (January 5, 1905), 11.

> of his illustrations from our soil--thrilling with pride over President Jackson's misspelled letters, and putting forward "Commodore" Vanderbilt, Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Carnegie, and Mr. Schwab, as splendid examples of accomplishment, unretarded by early erudition...it is amusing to watch Mr. Carnegie thrusting a surfeit of books upon the American people, and to see him at the same time held up to English eyes as a shining example of what may be achieved by letting books alone.[11]

Contemporary writers such as the Professor E. A. Ross ventured to question the wisdom of those who sought to ameliorate these same conditions by applying the doctrine of struggle and survival of the fittest to economic and social issues. In a letter to his sociological friend Ward, in 1894, he spoke of denouncing the Social Darwinists who seemed to link up the "repulsive dog-eat-dog practices of current business and politics with that 'struggle for existence' which evoked the higher form of life."[12] He pointed out that this wasteful "fight for the spoil" was not helping the abler strains to multiply faster than others, and that it was the systems of social control rather than the social natures of their members that were being tested when groups struggle. He took issue with this maleficence in his outspoken book Sin and Society which attracted many readers:

> The spread of fiduciary relations, the enmeshing of industry in law, the interlacing of government and business, the multiplication of boards and inspectors all invite to sin. What gateways they open to greed! What fresh parasites they let in on us! How idle in our new situation to intone the old litanies...unlike the old time villain the latter-day malefactor does not wear a slouch hat and a comforter, breathe forth curses and an odor of gin, go about his nefarious work with clenched teeth and an evil scowl--the modern highpowered dealer of woes wears immaculate linen, carries a silk hat and a lighted cigar, sins with calm countenance and a serene soul, leagues or months from the evil he causes. Upon his gentlemanly presence the eventual blood and tears do not obtrude themselves.[13]

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[11]Repplier, "A Plea for Ignorance," XXXXI (June 25, 1903), 594.

[12]American Sociological Review, "Ward-Ross Correspondence," III, 387, 391.

[13]Ross, Sin and Society, 11.

Such was the situation when Theodore Roosevelt became the president elect. To all appearances (which later proved misleading) he seemed acutely disturbed with these existing abuses in business and politics, and set about to right all wrongs with such vengeance that Elihu Root, Secretary of War and Roosevelt's personal friend, went so far as to accuse him of inagining that he had discovered the Ten Commandments because he tended to see all questions as moral issues and as refractions of that ethical confusion which abounded everywhere. Nevertheless, says Commager:

> He dramatized popular issues and avoided dangerous ones, such as tariff and banking reform...and even those issues to which he had committed himself, like trust and railway regulation, pure food and child labor, he was always ready to compromise on "half a loaf" rather than risk a break with the Old Guard of his party.[14]

The trusts were more powerfully entrenched when he left office than they were when he entered it. For if he seemed to espouse more effective railway regulation, he did not support the measures which might have made such regulation possible. If he denounced the "malefactors of great wealth," he, nevertheless, remained critical of the "muckrakers" who exposed them. Likewise, if he demanded a "square deal" for labor, he remained vitriolic in his denunciation of men like Bryan who sincerely tried to inaugurate it. Finally, he took no positive or decisive steps to curtail individual fortunes, or to secure through taxation, an equitable distribution of wealth.

Agnes Repplier found him "blundering, perhaps, but as honest as the sun." Her early convictions were premature and probably based on such newspaper reports as the following one which appeared in the New York Times.

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[14]Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, II, 388.

> Mr. Roosevelt has a most refreshing habit of calling men and things by their right names, and in these days of judicial, ecclesistical and journalistic subserviency to the robber barons of the Street, it needs some little courage in any public man to characterize them and their acts in fitting terms. There is a splendid career open for a young man of position, character and independence like Mr. Roosevelt.[15]

Mark Sullivan reports that America at the turn of the century saw Roosevelt as an ineffectual amateur trying to introduce ideas so far in advance of the time as to seem Utopian. In their eyes he was no match for men like Senator Foraker of the Old Guard who seemed secure in their seats of power. However, alarmed in 1908, when it was discovered that these same men were agents of a system that had grown to seem monstrous, the American people saw the ideas of Roosevelt as the people's salvation, and Roosevelt himself as St. George fighting the dragon.

When Senator Foraker ran as a candidate for re-election in 1908 after an exposure by Randolph Hearst, concerning large sums of money he had received from the Standard Oil Company in exchange for looking after proposed legislation, Roosevelt inspired a newspaper dispatch telling the people of Ohio that in "the opinion of President Roosevelt, to support Foraker is an act of treason against the Republican Party." Consequently, Foraker was dashed on the rocks of public odium, defeated, and carried into a backwater of retirement.

Perhaps it was at this time that Agnes Repplier began to see through Roosevelt, for the incident inspired her to comment that

> If any country is happy enough to possess a good old-fashioned, flame-breathing, tail-lashing, virgin-eating dragon, the United States has got the man to hunt him...the distinguished Nimrod who now recounts for us his slaying of bears and wolves must sigh at heart for deadlier beasts to conquer....It is enough to disgust one with

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[15]The New York Times, April 6, 1882, as quoted in Sullivan, op. cit., 362.

> modernity. Its limitations are so obvious. Combine a good dragon with a printing press, and what might we not obtain?[16]

Over the years that marked his presidency, she steadily bantered his careful avoidance of the tariff issue, his own sturdy brand of democracy, and his quixotic attempts at destroying the very real windmills of big business.

She often used a seemingly playful, good-natured, raillery when commenting upon his activities. Actually, however, she saw in Roosevelt, the semblance of a benevolent monarch, but a monarch, nevertheless, who was nothing more than a mere figure-head when it came to protecting the nation against the encroachments of the great lords of industry. "The King has abdicated. Spare us another Royal Family" she wrote in November of 1908 in a telling article whose title betrayed her feeling--"For This Relief Much Thanks."[17]

It is not likely that she would have agreed with the statement of the anonymous writer who said, "Mr. Roosevelt is easily the most astonishing event in American History." If anything, she found him, as did Henry Adams "all act" and "quite a bore." His insistence upon always being in the public eye never ceased to irritate her. An article by Jacob Riis on Roosevelt caused her to comment that there was something radically indecent in writing biographies of living men. To her mind nothing was comparable to

> the haunting horror of knowing that because you are the President of the United States, your feeblest remarks will be saved up for copy; and that you cannot tell a little boy that you like to ride in a hotel lift, without, months afterwards, reading this harmless

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[16]Repplier, "Wanted a Dragon, " XXXXVI (November 1, 1908), 522.

[17]Repplier, "For This Relief Much Thanks," LII (November 19, 1908), 552.

> statement in the columns of a magazine....Has our sense of humor departed in company with our lost reticence, and our misconception of the dignity of office?[18]

Roosevelt's own modest appraisal of himself would also have left her quite unimpressed.

> If I am somewhat popular it is because my compatriots consider me almost a complete specimen of the national type.
> I was a civil magistrate. I am again a civil magistrate. I have six children. In every way I am a good American and all my countrymen know it.[19]

Nevertheless, in April, 1909, Miss Repplier had to ruefully admit that there wasn't likely to be any dearth of information concerning the new president, Mr. Taft, either. She noted that the newspapers were already chronicling his uneventful days, and giving a candid account of his every waking hour. Playfully she confessed that there was something tame about the record, after the more vivid history of Mr. Roosevelt's activities.

> We miss the old familiar headlines, "President braves the storm!" and the thrilling paragraph telling how the head of the nation walked home at night from the Gridiron Club, through snow two inches deep, and how he shook the flakes from his broad shoulders, and stamped them from his boots at the White House door....There was a "Napoleon crossing the Alps" flavor about all this which set our blood tingling and which Mr. Taft, paddling along in his new motor, can hardly hope to rival![20]

Almost from the first year that Roosevelt was in the White House she made light of his own personal, sturdy brand of democracy.

In an article entitled "Juvenilia,"[21] she paused over the statement of one enterprising reporter, who assured the public that the President's sons shared their daily luncheon with the coachman's children. Such

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[18]Repplier, "The Baneful Biographer," XXXXIII (March 10, 1904), 41.

[19]Thomas Gross, The Cartoonist and T.R., 353.

[20]Repplier, "The Color of Life," LIII (April 11, 1909), 546.

[21]Repplier, "Juvenilia," XXXVIII (October 4, 1901), 328.

an extraordinary revelation she knew would rejoice a democratic country, and so she proceeded to recommend the topic to future purveyors of nursery anecdotes.

Mrs. Roosevelt's methods of shopping also gave her occasion to pursue this same topic.

> It is something to know that she has "no special business-paper" when she writes to an upholsterer or to a shoemaker; but uses her "ordinary note-paper," with the Sagamore Hill stamp on it, while she is at Oyster Bay. It is a relief to our minds to hear that she does not say "My dear Mr. Jones" to the upholsterer, nor "Dear Friend" to the shoemaker; but writes formally in the third person....
>
> What quality was the sample enclosed? How much do the handkerchiefs cost? How are they marked?...Why does Mrs. Roosevelt order two dozen at a time? How long does it take to lose that number in the White House laundry?[22]

A third opportunity to call attention to Roosevelt's democracy came in 1905 when Miss Alice Roosevelt was returning from Europe. Would she be permitted to enter the country in possession of her untaxed packing cases? Would the law be softened for the President's daughter? If so, then other women would likewise want to smuggle in their finery through the Custom House and say, "It can't be any harm because Miss Roosevelt's boxes came in free of duties." Such a course would be for them a sort of justification by faith with hope centered in the White House packing cases.

However, ordinarily Miss Repplier's attacks on the protective tariff were general rather than personal, and charges against the administration itself rather than against the President, although he continued to come in for his full share of castigation.

The history of the tariff had been a long and turbulent one.

The leaders of the Republican Party used the party immediately

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[22]Repplier, "Information Wanted," XXXXIV (October 27, 1904), 397.

after the Civil War as an instrument for getting and keeping a high protective tariff on manufactured goods. The farmers, who in the seventies held a political majority, and who thought of the Republican party in terms of moral leadership, voted to endow and nourish "infant industries." Early in the new century when the farmers were a definite minority, subordinated politically and economically, they tried unsuccessfully to arrest and reverse the tariff, but they were too late. The "Common Man" complained, too, of the high cost of living, but to no avail. No downward revision of the tariff became evident.

Roosevelt had toyed with the idea. Once in a preliminary draft to Congress, sent to the newspapers, he impulsively incorporated a vague suggestion that at some future time he would send another message recommending a tariff revision. However, an urgent warning from the hard-boiled "Standpatter," "Uncle Joe Cannon," insistent to know "whence comes this so-called demand for tariff tinkering? Aren't all our fellows happy?"[23] made Roosevelt quickly delete the message by telegraph before it became public.

The issue was one Miss Repplier never tired of placing before the public. In 1908 when the election trends indicated a Republican victory, she took occasion to comment upon Roosevelt's remissness in the matter. "It is to be hoped," she wrote, "that the elusive generality 'tariff reform,' which glitters on the political horizon, will crystallize during the next administration into some measure of relief for the unhappy citizens of the United States who are compelled to run the guantlet of the New York Custom House."[24] However, by 1910 upon her return from Europe,

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[23]Sullivan, IV, 362.

[24]Repplier, "Pity the Persecuted," LII (August 13, 1908), 174.

her hopes were once again dashed to the rocks. After a careful perusal of a circular issued to tourists concerning custom duties, with an asperity tantamount to scorn, she lashed out vindictively:

> ...the circular blandly explains that the returning tourist will be called upon to make a declaration of all that he has purchased in Europe; and that, as no one will believe this declaration when made, the contents of his trunks and packages will be "carefully examined" on the docks. He is bidden--regardless of the exigencies of packing--to put all dutiable articles where they can at once be seen, and he is given a heart-breaking list of the taxes imposed upon everything he may have bought, from a handkerchief to a pen-and-ink drawing, with ominous hints as to the character of the retribution which will overtake him should he hide the handkerchief or the pen-and-ink drawing from the inspector's eye.
>
> ...then follows a priceless paragraph....
>
> "Any personal effects taken with you as baggage, which are brought back with you in the same condition as when taken abroad, will be admitted free, if the identification can be established."
>
> This seems almost too liberal. To allow the citizens of the United States to bring back their old clothes untaxed is an excess of munificence which may yet reduce the nation to bankruptcy. The more the tourist thinks of it, the oftener he contemplates the time-worn garments he has not dared to replace, and realizes that he will not be called upon to pay sixty per cent duty on their original cost, the more affecting such generosity appears....[25]

She was equally as adamant in the case of prohibition which she opposed strenuously on the grounds that it meant a lessening of revenue, an added burden of taxation, and the spelling of ruin for the breweries and grape growers. A bottle of California wine, she held, was much more useful and pleasant (even to contemplate!) than the thousand of gimcracks exposed for sale by shopkeepers at Christmas. She likewise thought the absurd belief that it was more moral to drink ice-water than wine to be a genuine heresy, and liked to reinforce her argument by quoting the early Fathers of the Church, who recommended a cup of wine occasionally as a positive aid to holiness.

However, all such domestic issues were dwarfed or even forgotten

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[25]Repplier, "The Common Weal," LVI (August 11, 1910), 114.

for the time being by the events which led up to our nation's entrance into World War I.

As early as 1896 Life was unfriendly to the Kaiser because of his arrogant conceit and overweening ambition. Charles Dana Gibson, Life's artist, had caricatured him mildly during the Spanish American War, but for the artist, and a great many other Americans, including Agnes Repplier, the German invasion of Belgium unbalanced the scales of neutrality. Other German tactics such as the sinking of the Lusitania, the use of poison gas, unrestricted submarine warfare, one alienating desperate expedient followed another while America looked on. "Not yet but soon," muttered the Gibson Uncle Sam drawn for Life.

Although her own views were identical with those of the brave little weekly, when the war came, Miss Repplier found Life too confining for the many things she had to say. Instead, the burden of her thoughts found expression in much longer essays which made their way into periodicals such as The Atlantic Monthly. Although Miss Repplier's war essays do not fall within the scope of the present study, it is well to point out to the interested student of this phase of Miss Repplier's work that these essays when studied should be investigated as a segment of the general war literature of the period and not as a separate entity.

At the conclusion of the war, Miss Repplier once more resumed her articles for Life, but much of her old zest and hearty optimism were gone.

> Is it possible to avert war by cultivating sentimentalities in times of peace? Is it possible that "No War" days and "No War" meetings and "No War" posters can remake the human heart, even the American heart, which is susceptible to such influences?...The pacifists have made patriotism a discredited virtue. "We should love all nations in such a way that it would be barely possible to love our own more than another." It is a large order, and its practical utility

depends upon all nations loving us as well as they do themselves. They give no present indication of this universality of affection.[26]

In 1921 she noted that while the gentle Quakers were feeding the children and students of Germany, that single-tracked nation was developing a gun which would fire two thousand bullets a minute and which would be operable by a gunner a half-mile away. She noted, too, that France contemplated this "peaceful product" with a sour disposition, wounding to the pacifist's soul, and that Russia was feeding its own Army while allowing a benevolent world to feed its women and children because "she [Russia] is not by way of permitting a sloppy sentiment to mar her sense of values."[27]

A year later in the same stringent mood she questioned why Russia should be spending its money on Soviet propaganda in the United States, while the United States was still spending its money on food for Russia. She pointed out that the money Russia was then lavishing on Bolshevist literature and on National Communist Conventions in this country would go a long way towards feeding the starving children in its own land--but her plea went unheeded.[28]

She blamed no one in particular for these conditions in the early days of the twenties, but there was something of a pre-war flavor in her forecast of the 1920 presidential election.

Not one of the gentlemen stung by the over-driven presidential bee seems daunted by the outlook, or doubtful of his own ability to

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[26]Repplier, "Uncle Samson and Delilah," LXXX (November 9, 1922), 3.

[27]Repplier, "To Men of Good Will," LXXVIII (December 5, 1921), 35.

[28]Cf., Repplier, "Russia Gives and Gets," LXXXI (April 26, 1923), 11.

> perform the necessary miracles. The arrears of work piled up by an administration which has functioned too languidly to set its house in order, the arrears of ill-will piled up by cordial and animating hostilities, the dilemmas which no one has met, the obstacles which no one has tried to remove--these things might give pause even to a candidate. Yet never was there a time when so many would-be Presidents offered the benefit of their inexperience to the land.
>
> Well, one of the aspiring group will know the vanity of compassing his ambitions. One will be presented to the seething mob in Washington (which would turn out as cheerfully to his funeral), and when the "tumult and the shouting dies," the Augean stables await him....[29]

About election time, she recalled, the public hears itself spoken of in terms of respect and affection which do not mean anything at all because the public, unorganized, unconsolidated, without unions, or brotherhoods, or delegates, must pay the profiteering producer, the profiteering laborers, the profiteering landlord, the profiteering plumber and the profiteering cook. It works for long hours for meager salaries in stuffy office buildings and is dynamited whenever "our Bolshevist immigrants consider that financiers have too much money."

"Years ago," she concluded, "a railroad magnate put himself on record as saying a true word, 'The public be damned.' It is damned. To be damned is one of its functions....It always pays the piper, but it never calls the tune."[30]

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[29]Repplier, "Courage of the Candidate," LXXV (June 10, 1920), 1091.

[30]Repplier, "What Is The Public," LXXVI (October 28, 1920), 76.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION

During her lifetime Agnes Repplier often noted in her essays the pragmatic tendencies in educational theory and practice with genuine regret, for Pragmatism, with its humanist-derived Protagorean principle, "man is the measure of all things," was an attempt to establish the cult of science as a new means of salvation. Its advocates were William James and his disciple John Dewey. Its devotees were many, but Agnes Repplier was not among those who worshipped at its shrine.

Commager, and many other historians, are of the opinion that Evolution was chiefly responsible for the formulation of Pragmatism as it was also responsible for the abandonment of Transcendentalism. Darwin's Origin of the Species had been published in 1859 and as a result, Commager says,

> it was necessary to elaborate a new philosophy which would conform to and explain an organic world and a dynamic society. Truth could no longer be intuitive, plucked from the inner consciousness of man and beyond proof or disproof, nor yet what God revealed to man; but a hypothesis that could stand laboratory tests.[1]

At best, and under the impetus of John Dewey, whose chief contribution was to split the practical function of the mind from its speculative power, Pragmatism became in educational theory a philosophy of expediency, and as such, it met the challenge of our rapidly changing social

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[1]Commager, II, 271.

order at the beginning of the twentieth century. Or perhaps, one might say, it accommodated this social order by condoning its anxious concern for the here and now to the utter exclusion of any concern for the hereafter. To achieve this goal it became imperative in education to place an emphasis on vocational rather than on intellectual training.

Cognizant that this trend in education could only result in "passive barbarism--in sense of drift, a schism of soul, a loss of moral fiber and a nemesis of mediocrity due to a loss of an Absolute such as Infinite Life, Truth and Love"[2] Agnes Repplier attempted to ward off the impending doom. In 1924 she wrote:

> a curious symptom of our own day is that we have on one hand a strong and deep dissatisfaction with the mental equipment of young Americans, and on the other an ever-increasing demand for freedom, for self-development, for doing away with serious and severe study. ...The ideal college is one which prepares its students for remunerative positions, which teaches them how to answer the kind of questions that the captains of industry may ask. ... When I see it asserted that vocational training is necessary for the safety of democracy (that lusty nursling which we persist in feeding from the bottle)... I know that I am asked to credit an absurdity. When the reason given for this dependence is the altruism of labor,--'In a democracy the activity of the people is directed towards the good of the whole number,'--I know that common sense has been violated and that I have been asked to credit an absurdity, which no one is expected to take seriously. ...We stand today on an educational no man's land, exposed to double fires and uncertain safety...we are content to rest our security upon oratorical platitudes and generalities...it shows that the country does not feel itself rich enough for intellectual luxuries.[3]

The challenge, as she saw it, was to liberate human reason from the very threat of anti-intellectualism with which the educational theories of the day, derived as they were from Pragmatism, engulfed it.

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[2]Fulton J. Sheen, "Education in America," Address delivered at the National Catholic Educational Association's Convention, St. Louis, April, 1955.

[3]Repplier, "The Battlefield of Education," Under Dispute, 282.

Against the subtle and pernicious danger of identifying a single philosophy of education with democracy, or of imposing one acceptable form of standardization on all schools, or one group or one class on one mentality by a single control, she spoke sharply. She realized clearly that the democratic educational ideal is unity but not uniformity because unity allows for diversity of points of view regarding the right means to the right end, while uniformity denies it. Democracy, she held, decays when everyone has the same knowledge, looks at civilization through the same books under the tutelage of the same standardization. She foresaw that if universalized, the secularistic, the materialistic or the agnostic point of view would produce in America not intellectual and enlightened citizens but "conditioned puppets," and so she protested.

For example, recognizing in Socialism an inherent threat to democracy, she took occasion to review Colin A. Scott's Social Education. In a passage superb for its restraint of irony, she used soft words of praise to imply her hard contempt:

> Colin A. Scott's careful study...leaves its readers duly impressed with the supreme and overwhelming importance of understanding the child at every step of his career, of making his citizenship date from his schooldays, or moulding him, through the principle of organization, into an active and intelligent member of the state. The book is sincere, earnest, ardent. There is no flaw to be found in its reasoning. We wish Dr. Keate could have had the advantages of reading it before he became Head Master of Eton School and hammered out good scholars and brave men by the help of processes we hardly like now to consider.[4]

Socialism was not new in this country. True, for the most part the American soil remained barren of its impress, but nevertheless, in its long history, it succeeded in alienating large groups of immigrants who might otherwise have become absorbed through education or at least

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[4]Repplier, LIII (January 28, 1909), 134.

acclimated to the American way of life. This became apparent at the precipitation of World War I when the Socialists in this country pledged themselves not to take up arms.

As nationalistic fervor rose, feeling against the socialists increased and many Americans, Agnes Repplier among them, deplored this educational defect. After the war the teaching of "Americanism" became an urgent necessity and a renewed national effort in education.

Once again the ideas took classic form from the writings of John Dewey who gave systematic philosophical expression to the belief that the more exclusive types of nationalism and patriotism were no longer adequate instruments to test plans for the solution of pressing problems.

Influenced by Dewey, and regarding themselves as an advance guard, a group of educators began to insist on a civic as opposed to a military patriotism. The point of departure was the small group, family, school, church, community, since each of these pointed concretely to the actual meaning of sacrifice for the common good. Emphasis on the achievements of the United States in promoting the well-being of all people replaced the stressing of war. And the teachers were not allowed to neglect pointing out the virtues of other lands.

This aspect of the program was a carry-over from an earlier movement at the turn of the century which had employed the same method for a different purpose--catering to public sentiment. In 1904 Agnes Repplier wrote:

> We have books on old Japan, and books on new Japan, and books, I have no doubt on the false Japan, though their writers are too uncandid to admit it....It all seems a trifle overdone. The sympathy of one nation for another is based on its hostility for a third, and the recognized duty of authors is to cater to public sentiment.... Perhaps when we have clapsed Japan closer to our bosom, we may not

love her quite so well.[5]

Hers was a prophetic voice.

The task as Dewey saw it in terms of education, was to develop the desirable aspects of nationalism. He believed that such constructive patriotism would enable people to prevent self-seeking politicians from cleverly playing on the emotion of national loyalty and the ignorance of other lands to advance their own interests. But, in spite of such highly altruistic thinking, American textbooks continued to interpret world events in the light of American expediency. For example, the propaganda which made its way into our school books during the years following the Spanish Civil War served not only to revive but also to accentuate certain notions about Spaniards, which had long been dormant among English-speaking people--notions so deeply rooted that even today the majority of Anglo-Americans find in them an adequate explanation of the Spanish Civil War and of the present regime in Spain without any further investigation or regard for truth.

Dewey believed, too, that the integral emphasis in nationalism was ill-suited. He held that the uniqueness and greatness of the American nation was the richness and variety of its people, and he advocated "respect for those elements of diversification in cultural traits which differentiate our national life." Even in regard to the war he had objected to the insistence on nation-wide conformity to conventional ideas of national loyalty and patriotism. Desirable and necessary as unity was in the crisis, he held it could best be obtained through intelligence and education. He called upon the schools not to foster mere veneration and blind devotion to our country, but also to engender an intelligent

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[5]Repplier, "A Rising Tide," XXXXIV (August 11, 1904), 144.

understanding of its laws, institutions, its spirit of freedom, and its "triumphant march onward" in the sphere of democracy and human values. Only thus, he held, could "progressive patriotism" manifest itself.

Agnes Repplier considered these same values but with a different perspective.

"Democracy," she pointed out in her very fine essay on Americanism, "forever teases us with the contrast between its ideals and its realities, between its heroic possibilities and its sorry achievements."[6] The cornerstone of civilization, as she saw it, is man's dependence for protectection on the state which he has reared for his own support and safety. Therefore, the primary concern of Americans must be a deep and loyal sentiment which brooks no injustice and no insult. Fidelity is our first and foremost need.

> The real significance of the "Americanization" movement, the summoning of conferences, the promoting of exhibitions, the bestowing of prizes, is the need we all feel of unification...we could make shift to do without the posters and the symbolic statuary; we could read fewer poems and listen to fewer speeches; but we cannot possibly dowwithout the loyalty which we have a right to demand, and which is needful to the safety of the Republic.[7]

It was strange, she reflected, toggalnce back upon the day when we could--in the absence of serious problems--raise pronunciation or spelling into a national issue. Americanism, which she defined as civic loyalty founded on civic intelligence, was done with trivialities and patriotism with matters of taste.

> Of all the countries in the world, we and we only have any need to create artificially the patriotism which is the birthright of other nations....Americans will never weld a mass of heterogeneous humanity into a nation, until they are able to say what they want

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[6]Repplier, "Americanism," Counter-Currents, 288.

[7]Ibid., 271

> that nation to be, and until they are prepared to follow a policy intelligently outlined. In other words, Americanism is not a medley of individual theories, partial philanthropies, and fluid sentiment. A consistent nationalism is essential to civic life, and we are not dispensed from achieving consistent nationalism by the difficulties in our way.[8]

Yet, the breadth of her own learning precluded any false illusions concerning the achievements of America. In 1932, when Arthur Hobson Quinn's book entitled The Soul of America was released for publication, she took occasion to comment:

> The second half of The Soul of America grows thin because the author feels the necessity of saying a civil word about all poets, novelists and dramatists whose Americanism pleases him...."We owe Europe nothing," is Mr. Quinn's final summing up of the situation. If he means money, we do not. Europe owes us money. If he means anything else, we do. The civilized world is an intricate network of debts which everyone owes to its neighbors, which it acknowledges and strives to pay in kind. This is, indeed, the essence of civilization.[9]

The effects of scientific revolution and the complex growth of American economic life contributed greatly to a demand for the "practical" education Dewey advocated. One result was the relative decline of classical and humanistic studies. The ideal college, Agnes Repplier acutely observed, is the one which prepares its students for remunerative positions and teaches them how to answer the kind of questions that industrial captains may ask. The repetition of this thought is to reaffirm her belief that

> learning and wealth have never run in harness since Cadmus taught Thebes the alphabet...but one thing is sure: unless we are prepared to grant the full value of scholarship which adds nothing to the wealth of nations, or to the practical utilities of life, we shall have only partial results from education....Vocational training and vocational guidance are a little like intensive farming. They are obvious measures for obvious results; they economize effort;

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Repplier, book review of The Soul of America by Quinn, Commonweal, XVI, 250.

> they keep their goal in view. If they "pander to cabbages," they produce as many and as fine cabbages the soil they till can yield.... But the mere reader, who is not an educational economist, asks himself now and then in what fashion Milton and Dryden would have written, if vocational training had supplanted the classics in their day....In the United States we have never been kindly disposed towards extravagance of this order....it is universally understood that Americans cannot afford to spend money on the study of the "best that has been known and thought in the world."[10]

She insisted, too, that our vast heterogeneous population constantly provides problems which call for an historical solution, and that our foreign relations would be clarified by a greater accuracy of knowledge.

This truth paved the way for her assertion that of all the direct products of education (of education as an end in itself, and not as an approach to something else) the most essential is a knowledge of history. "Every now and then," she lamented, "some educator or some politician who controls educators, makes the 'practical' suggestion that no history prior to the American Revolution shall be taught in the public schools. Every now and then some able financier affirms that he would not give a fig for any history, and marshalls the figures of his income topprove its uselessness." To this fundamental lack of knowledge she attributed many of the dislocations in American society. And concerning those who sought to ameliorate existing conditions, she remarked:

> ... the neglect of history practiced by educators who would escape its authority, stands responsible for much mental confusion. American boys and girls go to school six, eight or ten years, as the case may be, and emerge with a misunderstanding of their own country and a comprehensive ignorance of all others....
>
> I used to think that ignorance of history meant only a lack of cultivation and a loss of pleasure. Now I am sure that such ignorance impairs our judgment by impairing our understanding, by depriving us of standards, of the power to contrast, and the right to estimate.[11]

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[10] Repplier, "The Battlefield of Education," Under-Dispute, 278.

[11] Ibid.

A volume on "child culture" (a phrase as reprehensible to her as "Child-material") which spoke of naughty children as "patients," implying that their unfortunate condition was involuntary, and must be cured from without, not from within, led her to observe that often "our feverish fear lest we offend against the helplessness of childhood, our feverish concern lest it should be denied its full measure of content, drive us, burdened as we are with good intentions, past the border line of wisdom."

She noted the emphatic voice of protest against such well-meant but enfeebling educational methods struck by William James in his "Talks to Teachers," published in 1899.

> The phrase, "Economy of Effort," so dear to the kindly hearts of Frobel's followers, had no meaning for Dr. James. The ingenious system by which the child's tasks, as well as the child's responsibilities, are shifted to the shoulders of the teacher, made no appeal to his incisive intelligence. He stoutly asserted that effort is oxygen to the lungs of youth, and that it is sheer nonsense to suppose that every step of education can possibly be made interesting. The child, like the man, must meet his difficulties and master them.[12]

She was aware that it is a dangerous thing to call kindness sentimental, but she felt, nevertheless, that the notion that children have a right to happiness, add the sincere effort to protect them from any approach to pain, would lead imperceptibly to the elimination from their lives of many strength-giving influences.

Closely allied to this thought was her conviction that the watering down of the great classics, to the "supposed understanding" of the child, had been carried so far that there was no opportunity for the child to exert what mind he possessed, or to grasp a single thought above the nursery level.

A short study of juvenile literature which has been printed this

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[12]Repplier, "Popular Education," Counter-Currents, 188.

> past season for the undermining of infant intellects leaves us in a state of painful doubt as to whether little boys and girls have grown hopelessly stupid, or whether theyaare merely being trained into habits of early vacuity.
>
> It is assumed that they have not sense enough to read "David Copperfield" or "Nicholas Nickleby"--those true and lasting friends--so little David, torn from his context, is served up like a sort of rice pudding at the nurseryttable....Even poor little Eva has been dragged from the retirement of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to expire lingeringly for the edification of the nursery.
>
> "There's sore decline in Adam's line" if our young people can no longer set their minds to work upon real books, but must be spoon-fed with the weak and scanty nourishment their nursery shelves afford.[13]

In later life she liked to think back upon her own childhood which lay very far away, "a blissful period of intermission" when education was embryonic rather than exhaustive, and the new era of child-study and mothers' congresses lay darkly in the future.

> "Symbolic education," "symbolic play," were phrases all unknown. The revolutionary "discoveries" of Karl Groos had not yet overshadowed the innocent diversions of infancy. Nobody drew scientific deductions from jackstones, or balls, or gracehoops, save only when we assailed the wealth of nations by breaking a window-pane. Nobody was even aware that the impulses which sent us speeding and kicking up our heels like lyoung colts were "vestigial organs of the soul." ...How we grasped our "objective relationship" to our mothers without the help of bird's-nest games, I do not know....But as I look back, I can now see plainly that the few things little girls learned were admirably adapted for one purpose,--to make us parts of a whole, which whole was the family.[14]

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[13]Repplier, "Books for Babes," XXXXIII (February 11, 1904), 14.

[14]Repplier, "Popular Education," Counter-Currents, 171.

CHAPTER V

"WOMAN'S SPHERE"

"Woman's Sphere," a phrase which in this day and age has come to mean the entire universe, was still an inexplicable phenomenon in the year 1900 that shook the very ramparts of credulity in even the most scientific Pragmatic soul.

No one was really quite sure about the new little orbit. From where had it come? To where would it go? What was its composition? Was it a shooting star? Its speed suggested that. Or was it a comet?--a nucleus swarm of relatively small bodies.

Speculation and male panic increased as women's activities continued to multiply and gather momentum in the first quarter of the new century.

Agnes Repplier was a bit sardonic about it all. In jest she liked to quote George Meredith's statement that woman would be the last thing civilized by man. To his statement she liked to add, too, her own view that men would never make any great headway with women because women instinctively reject the processes which are intended to ensnare them.

> Man has never known a dull hour since woman, apple in hand, picketed him in the Garden of Eden, dictating terms of surrender. Her versatility and resourcefulness have kept him dodging reefs and scrambling out of quicksands, to the preservation of his wits and agility. He is still hard at work, inventing excuses when she burns an ally's flag, inviting her to tea when she flaunts defamatory banners at his doors, applauding politely when she interrupts his senatorial eloquence, and promising heaven and earth when she demands

them of presidential candidates.[1]

She considered it a waste of words when a gentleman from a Union Theological Seminary assured the graduates of Wellesley that they were slaves, and what was worse--contented slaves, with a preference for a confined, restricted life. That any man should feel himself called upon in the twentieth century to liberate American women from bondage, seemed to her, as a dispassionate observer, the acme of a fine, unconscious humor. Such a man was out of step with the times, and in her opinion, knew precious little about women.

It was a cause of irritation to her that from all sides women were being just a trifle over-counseled by men, and that they were the recipients of more advice than they could possibly hope to follow. Never before, she recalled when Theodore Roosevelt was in office, had a President of the United States chided women publicly about their most intimate concerns; never before, she lamented, had an Emperor of Germany prescribed their course of action; and never before had periodical literature been so bewilderingly full of exhortations and expostulations concerning them by men. If the twentieth century women didn't know how to conduct themselves, she concluded, it was not for want of cheap and copious instruction.

Her conviction was that sometimes women rushed upon their fate--in such cases they deserved what they received; but she felt it was rather difficult when a woman lay her unsuspecting hands on a non-partisan magazine and was confronted with pages of semi-reproachful, nursery-governess advice.

For example, in 1905 writing in the April issue of The Ladies Home Journal, Grover Cleveland admonished women not to join clubs, except

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[1]Repplier, "Eve," LXXVI (July 27, 1920), 148.

those with "purposes of charity, religious enterprise or intellectual improvement," because "her best and safest club is her home."[2]

Her own solution to the vexing problem was simple. With quiet humor she liked to quote an acute critic who pointed out that whenever Milton's Adam grew too discursive and didactic, Eve always slipped away and took a refreshing nap. To this observation she added, "And the wisdom of our first great mother enlightens us today."[3]

But her displeasure was not all on the side of the men. A typical Repplierian reaction to the Women's Clubs of the period can be summed up in the witticism of an unknown critic concerning one of Edith Wharton's characters: "Mrs. Ballinger is one of the ladies who pursue culture in bands as though it were dangerous to meet it alone."

The Women's Club movement was a large, wide and rather astonishing social innovation of the latter part of the Nineteenth Century and the first quarter of the Twentieth Century. In general the clubs fell into two distinct classifications. The first was the strictly cultural variety with intellectual self-improvement for its aim.

Prior to the Civil War such clubs had a modest beginning in Hannah Adam's little circle of learned women, and in Margaret Fuller's conversation groups. The Cozy Club of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and the Fenelon Street Circle of Dubuque, Iowa, both of which came into existence during the late fifties, seem also tohhave been small but amorphic examples of this type. After the Civil War the new leisure, consequent upon rapid scientific progress, made it possible for such clubs to flourish, and

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[2]Sullivan, II, 637.

[3]Repplier, "Exhortation," XXXXVI (December 7, 1905), 685.

coupled with the leisure, was the newly evolved concept of education for women which made such organizations desirable.

The history of these clubs is treated quite systematically by Inez Haynes Irwin in Angels and Amazons, who points out that by the first quarter of the Twentieth Century the "high society" of the East tended to scorn the Woman's Club, but that in the West, the term "prominent club-woman" became eventually synonymous with social leadership. Early in the new century such clubs came to the attention of the satirists, Agnes Repplier among them.

> A younger generation...now looking back over a national past which appeals only to their sense of humor, have left in many minds the impression that the earlywwoman's club dealt not in culture but in "culturine," that its main activity was the reading and discussion of dull little papers--futilely abstract cribbed from the encyclopedia.[4]

Mrs. Irwin goes on to relate that one club, particularly ambitious, surveyed in five years the entire history of the Christian period; that done, it plunged on courageously into philosophy. Other groups reviewed all world literature in translation, Greek, Latin, French, German, and Spanish, and often such groups offered supplementary courses in these languages. Still other groups specialized in music and the arts.

This mail-order catalog type of education in place of solid learning found little sympathy with Miss Repplier, who deplored such clubs along with Dr. Eliot's attempt "to measure our mentality with a five-foot rule, and set the critics a-measuring after him,"[5] when he initiated his forerunner of our own present-day Great Books movement. With telling humor she marked the eventual merger of the culture club into that of the Bridge

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[4]Irwin, Angels and Amazons, p. 212.

[5]Repplier, "Lists," LXXX (October 11, 1911), 9.

club, and set forth the merits of the latter as a chastener of society.

> ...where is the priceless discipline of life so enforced as at the Bridge table? There we are compelled to practice the Pagan virtue of fortitude and the Christian virtue of charity. There we learn the composure of the stoic and the patience of the saint. ...There we are trained to support the assaults of fortune and the swift reversals so proverbially trying to the female heart. ...
>
> There are Bridge plays destitute of Bridge virtues, players who commit the pardonable sin of grumbling at defeat and the unpardonable sin of chortling over victory; players who are guilty of unkindness in correcting their partners' errors, and of folly in bewailing their own. ...What every woman needs to know, (and, knowing, to cherish) are the calm philosophy, the large and logical outlook, the disciplined heroism, which are the perfected fruits of Bridge.[6]

The second type of organization was the purposeful variety of clubs which fostered the betterment of society and held the welfare of the community as its primary objective.

These clubs were foreshadowed in the pre-war days by the Anti-Slavery groups, the early women's temperance organizations and the suffrage societies. After the war the last two causes became national in scope.

In 1904 Woman Suffrage was a topic that ran through the news in the manner of a novelty, along with the growth of divorce and installment buying, especially of diamond rings. In 1905 Mr. Cleveland once more took occasion to counsel women. This time in the October issue of The Ladies Home Journal he told them that "sensible and responsible women do not want to vote" and that "the relative positions to be assumed by men and women were assigned long ago by a higher intelligence than ours."

By 1909 the agitation had increased and Miss Repplier wrote with some asperity:

> If women obtain the suffrage which some of them covet, and so become directly responsible for their share of legislative blunders,

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[6]Repplier, "Bridge, the Chastener," LIX (February 18, 1912), 303.

> it is to be hoped that they will cease holding themselves indirectly responsible for all that happens to the nation. We shall at least have a respite from the time-worn sentiment about rocking the cradle and ruling the world; for even the full-blown egotism of the American woman can hardly claim the prerogatives of both sexes.
>
> There are few things more flattering to human vanity than the assumption of boundless influence. When Mrs. Armor, "the Georgia cyclone," assures her female audience that "there was never a soul went to perdition but some woman was responsible for it," the audience, oblivious to the difference between a statement and a fact, dilates with pleasurable awe. It is gratifying to think that a man cannot reach either heaven or hell (strict theologians hold that he is bound to go to one or the other) unless personally conducted up or down the road. So few women get a reasonable chance to sin on their own account that there is compensation in believing--or in pretending to believe--that the copious misdemeanors of men may be laid at their doors. It saves them from being a negligible quantity.[7]

An article in Harper's Bazaar concerning English women by Marie Corelli, the British novelist, then at the height of her fame, provoked Miss Repplier to a caustic reply. The point of view expressed by Miss Corelli was that women who attempted to play an open game in politics and who sought the franchise were "libelous caricatures of effeminate men." The clever woman, she held, "sits at home and like a meadow spider, spreads a pretty web of rose and gold, spangled with diamond dew. Flies--or men--tumble in by scores, and she holds them all prisoners at her pleasure with a silken strand as fine as a hair."

Her conclusion was that one vote apiece granted to women would be no great thing when, as matters now stood, a woman often had forty or fifty male voters at her beck and call to do precisely as she bid. Nature, she claimed, gave woman this right at birth and if she managed to do it well, her web would always be full. To all this Miss Repplier replied in her usual forthright manner.

> It is very interesting, especially when one remembers that the meadow spider eats her flies, and, later on, eats her spider husband,

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[7]Repplier, "Vanity of Vanities," LIII (April 11, 1909), 546.

> too. ... It is the novelist's outlook upon our simple workaday world.
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> Does it ever occur to Miss Corelli that an unpretending woman might feel herself entitled to her own vote, without having the faintest ambition to control fifty male voters; or that a woman of ordinary parts might find captive flies the least inspiring of companions?[8]

When the mouthpiece of British progress, Votes for Women, published an advertisement entitled "God's Word to Women" which offered Bible lessons by correspondence that would demonstrate how the Scriptures teach the perfect equality of the sexes, Miss Repplier queried:

> Now why, one wonders, should the suffragist seek to shelter herself under the skirts of Judith or of Joel? ... Whatever the situation may be, there is always a text to fit it...surely seven pence could never be better expended than in demolishing the doctrine of subordination--a doctrine which in the United States is not at present a recognizable quality. ...
>
> It is a harmless word, [equality] and always effective for oratory. Whether Jeremiah or Ezekiel quite understood its modern significance is little to the purpose. They are not the controlling factors in English politics.[9]

Ten years later, shortly before suffrage was granted to women in this country, Miss Repplier noted that the New York Times quoted what she termed a "comprehensive statement" by Alice Meynell, the English poet and precieuse, to the effect that Lady Astor's election to Parliament was the greatest event in the last three hundred years of England's Constitutional history. From here Miss Meynell went on to add a characteristic story of a brilliant American, who, when addressing a "League of Nations" meeting in London, said smilingly that the woman's league was as yet only a beginning, only a little league, only a "half a league" but it was "onward." Whereupon the huge audience, the Times reported, took up the familiar words with delight.

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[8]Repplier, "A Point of View," L (July 18, 1907), 83.

[9]Repplier, "Authority," LVI (August 18, 1910), 275.

"One wonders," commented Miss Repplier, "if the huge audience remembered where the 'half a league' ended and if it meant to imply its chivalrous readiness to ride to that goal under woman's compelling leadership."[10]

Her meaningful reference, of course, was to the announcement in the New York Herald of April 2, 1870, of Victoria C. Woodhull's candidacy for the presidency of the United States. In order to promote her cause, Miss Woodhull established the Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, a small, well-printed folio of sixteen pages, each containing four columns. Under the name plate was the motto "Onward and Upward" which was soon replaced by "Progress! Free thought! Untrammeled Lines! Breaking the Way for Future Generations!" In its pages Victoria was supported for the presidency, the cause of suffrage was promoted, and the discussion of the "woman question" was extended to include the realms of prostitution, marriage relations, and free love. Ultimately the paper became flagrantly sensational and met a well-deserved end in June, 1876. However, during the six years of its existence, the Weekly did much to damage the prestige of the women's movement, and, no doubt, the remembrance of it was one of the reasons for Miss Repplier's cynical attitude towards the prominence of women in the public eye.

In 1931 Miss Repplier reviewed Lucy Stone, Pioneer of Woman's Rights written by Mrs. Stone's daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell. She found the volume heavy to hold "after the fashion of American books which need a derrick to hoist them," but easy and light to read. In her review Miss Repplier remarks that the workers for equal suffrage had a hard fight

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[10]Repplier, "Eve," LXXVI (July 22, 1920), 174.

and many discouragements, but "that there is not a shadow of doubt that they enjoyed the struggle."

She noted wryly that the strongest proof of Lucy Stone's capacity for enjoyment was the pleasure she derived from the flurry she created by keeping her maiden name after marriage--"The only person who appears to have been indifferent on the subject was Mr. Blackwell. The matter seemed to him of no especial importance."[11]

However, the main purpose of Miss Repplier's review was to point out the common inconsistency of advocates such as Lucy Stone who were, in her own mind at least, often one-sided in their patriotism.

In the book, for example, the whole of the Civil War, and Miss Stone's part in it, were dismissed in one brief paragraph.

> The war was a sad time for Mrs. Stone, as for thousands of others. Its whole atmosphere of bloodshed and political corruption was alien to her, and intensified her sense of the wrong of shutting women out of the franchise. She said the government could take any mother's son away to be shot, "and afterwards put its bloody hand in her pocket to help pay the bills."[12]

The response of Miss Repplier was neatly to the point: "And that was all that Lincoln, and Lee, and the 600,000 men who died for the cause they believed in, and for the land they loved, meant to Lucy Stone."

Succinctly, Miss Repplier's whole attitude towards woman suffrage might be summed up in her paradoxical statement, "only a very wise woman doubts her equality; only a very foolish man denies it."[13]

She looked upon her own time as the "golden age of spinsters," and frequently took occasion to point out the advantages of the American

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[11]Repplier, book review of Lucy Stone, Pioneer of Woman's Rights by Alice Stone Blackwell, Commonweal, XIII (April 1, 1931), 612.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Repplier, "Authority," LVI (August 18, 1910), 275.

spinster which included the opportunity of making her own mark in the world.

She liked to reiterate that a woman who remained in the single state was not necessarily frustrated in love, but often had no inclination to marry and enjoyed retaining her independence--a quite incomprehensible attitude to many people--the Right Honorable John Burns, a labor leader and champion of the poor, for one. Reading in the Saturday Review that he advocated the legal restriction of woman's work, and stood ready to drive it from the field, Miss Repplier denounced him soundly in a manner reminiscent of Swift.

> The woman's reasonable desire to be fed, clothed, and sheltered, and her reasonable conviction that she ought to be allowed to provide food, clothes and shelter for herself, rather than go without, are points which the Saturday Review does not pause to consider. Of course, her battling for these things is a social inconvenience to the men who are battling for them, too. The only way to prevent superfluous women from inconveniencing men is to drown them at birth. A flabby sentimentalism forbids this straight-forward method of dealing with the difficulty; but it would be far more humane than driving them from work because they interfere with their betters.[14]

Another facet of the "Women's Sphere" that often held the attention of Miss Repplier was what she liked to call "financial fiction" or "experimental economy." In the first of several essays written on this topic, as early as 1899, she brought to the notice of her readers the fact that there was a subdued murmur of resentment which was gradually becoming more audible from a very large class of women who spent their days in making narrow incomes cover the cruel cost of living--an art in which it was presumed femininity excelled ever since Eve exchanged the simple housekeeping and simpler costume of Paradise for the great grim world of toil.

Only now the daughters of Eve were expected to accomplish miracles

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[14]Repplier, "In the Way," LI (June 4, 1908), 708.

of refined thrift because experts (all of them male) were writing columns of counsel in the daily press and current periodicals. In Philadelphia "an expert of experts" was showing the workingman's wife how a model home should be run and attempting to prove, at least to his own and the public's satisfaction, that the workingman could enjoy all of the comforts and many of the luxuries of life, such as his dinner in three courses, his cup of black coffee, and "let us hope," interposed Miss Repplier, "his cigarette and cordial, to speed digestion and repose."[15] It was to her mind "an interesting experiment, especially to the rich, who liked to talk about the prosperity of the poor."[16]

Such sportive idealists who wrote these engaging columns she felt should feel the prick of conscience when they recalled the simple credulity of the public.

> It is a cruel pleasantry to deceive those who are so easily deceived. The grim truth is that the cost of living is mercilessly high in this land of plenty, and it grows higher and higher with every year of prosperity. ... A few timely papers on "My Baby's Measles, and What It Cost;" "How My Husband Lost His Situation;" "The Failures of Forty Cooks;" "Why Our Little Home Was Never Paid For," could hardly be depended upon to raise the circulation of a periodical; but they would present to their startled readers the unfamiliar countenance of truth.[17]

With no apology for her acerbity, she pointed out that it was reserved for an American (Cyrus H. K. Curtis) to show the world how a great business success could be built up "on no other foundation than the presumed feeblemindedness of women."[18]

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[15]Repplier, "Experimental Economy," XXXIII (February 3, 1899), 154.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Repplier, "Financial Fiction," XXXVI (October 1, 1905), 43.

[18]Repplier, "Mild Food for the Feminine Intellect," XXXIII (March 16, 1899), 207.

Curtis had moved to Philadelphia in 1879 and had begun publication of The Tribune and Farmer, a four-page weekly with a subscription rate of fifty cents a year. One of the weekly's popular features, Curtis noted, was the section devoted to subjects of interest to women written by his wife, so in 1883 he decided to publish a separate monthly supplement called the Ladies Journal to his magazine. The first issue contained an illustrated serial, articles on flower culture, fashion notes, advice on the care of children, and articles on cooking, needlework, and handicrafts.[19] The new magazine had 25,000 subscribers by the end of its first year.

In 1889 Curtis hired Edward Bok as editor. Bok, who had come from Holland as a child, was young, ambitious, didactic, and self-assured.

He was determined not only to make the Ladies Home Journal a magazine which provided intimate and personal service to its readers, but also to bring about changes for the better in American home life. Before long he was advising women about affairs of the heart under the pseudonym of Ruth Ashmore in a column entitled "Side Talks to Girls." In it he advised them to "learn to say no" and not to give their photographs to every Tom, Dick, and Harry. He told women, too, how to dress becomingly, how to conduct themselves, how to feed their families, and how to bring up their children. He attempted (and succeeded) to effect changes in home architecture and in home decoration. In order to achieve these ends, he employed physicians, nurses, and experts on cooking, beauty care, and household management. When the magazine reached its peak circulation of 850,000,

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[19]For a fuller treatment see James Playsted Wood, Magazines in the United States, (New York: The Ronald Press), "Edward Bok and the American Home," 115-117.

Bok proudly wrote in an editorial that "Wherever the mail goes, the Journal goes." But Miss Repplier's comment did not hold the same note of jubilation.

> The Ladies Home Journal has reached its phenomenal circulation by careful avoidance of all virility, a careful writing down to feminine standards. So strict is the discipline maintained that no member of the staff has ever been known to slip into the masculine attitude or adopt the masculine point of view. Even the columns of advice to young men are written for the edification of their mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and maiden aunts, who read all the counsel offered with infinite pleasure and profit. There are few things more delightful to middle-aged ladies in the country than to be warned gently but firmly of the pitfalls and temptations of life, or to be told how alertness and integrity will win for them commercial success. It can be no easy task to edit a periodical on these lines, and to escape even a careless lapse into intelligence. The labor involved in securing photographs of home-made chairs, "dear old ladies," tables at church fairs, and Mr. Moody's open bible, is greater than the uninitiated suppose. The responsibility of looking after the manners, morals, complexions, love affairs, and last year's dresses of thousands of young women must be heavy weight to bear. One thing only is left undone, one danger is still unaverted. If the enterprising Journal could but be persuaded to edit a series of school-books like those enjoyed by our great-great-grandmothers, its good work would be complete, and generations of women, fitted by education, for this pure enjoyment, would rise up to call themselves its readers.[20]

By 1920 the prominence of women's features in the American press caused her to remark that having mastered this enigma, the psychology of sex lies bare before our eyes and that we are wise with the wisdom of the initiated. The headlines, surfeited with emotion, interrogated many readers. "Can the College Woman Love?" "Can a Screen Vampire Make a Good Mother?" "Is the Forgiving Wife the Average or the Exceptional Woman?"

She found it significant that these educational conundrums were seldom propounded about men. Nobody seemed to care whether or not intelligence blighted their love, or whether the forgiving husband was the com-

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[20]Repplier, "Mild Food for the Feminine Intellect," loc. cit., 208.

mon or the exceptional man. She quoted one bold interrogator who asked: "Will Candy-Eating Become a Masculine Vice?" but she remarked slyly that "from the possibilities involved in such a query, her imagination shrunk appalled."[21]

She found the importance given to beauty contests by the American press a curious development of national taste, and the uncompromising character of the pictures themselves a stern evidence of the candor of photography. The Sunday papers were

> so jammed with beauties as to convey the frightful impression that the United States grew no other kind of women. From various resorts came pictures of "Bathing Beauties," nine deep like the Muses, and competing for a prize; "Neptune's most beautiful daughters," nineteen of them demanding approval and a wrist watch...the naive alacrity on the part of young women to assert their claim to loveliness and the praiseworthy temerity of the judges are amazing and unprofitable.[22]

Mark Sullivan records that at the turn of the century a new and pleasant adult pastime was that of making picture puzzles. Soon the fad provided a national new industry as well as a new amusement. Ingenious artificers, remarked Miss Repplier, were busy cutting the pictures up while ingenious players were busier fitting the pieces together. It was, she said, "a renewal of childhood joys, a happy illustration of 'Backward, turn backward, O Time in thy flight!' for which poets and sentimentalists are always affecting to yearn." Middle-aged ladies, she conceded, "cannot very well pretend they are wild Indians and go whooping about the porches with chicken feathers in their hair;"[23] therefore, they needed the gentle stimulus of games and toys to help them with their play. Naturally, such

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[21]Repplier, "Soul Searchings of the Press," LXXV (March 5, 1920), 547.

[22]Repplier, "The Fatal Gift of Beauty," LXXVIII (October 13, 1921), 4.

[23]Ibid.

games should be sedentary in their character, (Diavlo, being adapted to the young and agile, must be quickly thrown aside) therefore, picture puzzles, might confer a benefit upon declining years. Perhaps, but her philosophical mind forced her to conclude: "In what a barren and play-thingless period must Pope have lived, where beads and prayer books were the only toys he could provide for age."[24]

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[24] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE COLOR OF LIFE

If one word could have been used to characterize the first quarter of the twentieth century with its perfection of numerous inventions, such as the Trans-atlantic Cable, the radio, the airplane, the automobile, the telephone, and the motion picture, undoubtedly that one word in the mind of Agnes Repplier would have been noise.

> The most hideous thing to contemplate in a world quivering with noise is the determination of scientists to increase and perpetuate it. Each new invention is hailed with acclamations by a delighted public that can never have enough. ... Year after year brings with it some fresh device, each one more wonderful and more heart-rending than the last for the preservation of speech or song, that had otherwise been mercifully lost, and for transporting them over vast distances where they have renewed opportunities to annoy. ... Lived there a single scientist so civilized that he could feel for that intelligent and suffering minority who long in vain for quiet, he would invent some instrument which would prevent our hearing sounds we don't want to hear.[1]

A few years later the volume of noise continued to increase and Miss Repplier took occasion to lament once more the misdirected energy of scientists as one of the most sorry features of our headlong civilization. These gentlemen, she felt with a genuine regret, were devoting themselves assiduously, and with disastrous success, to facilitating intercourse and perpetuating sound, while the two crying needs of the modern man according to her, were solitude and silence. Furthermore, the kindly barriers which Providence designed for our protection--the vast

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[1]Repplier, "Noise," XXXX (September 25, 1901), 667.

spaces of our mother earth, the screening mountains and dividing rivers could no longer serve their purpose--even the estranging sea had ceased with the laying of the first trans-atlantic cable, to estrange.

Thanks, too, to the "diabolical ingenuity" of these scientists, the America of the first decade of the twentieth century, stood defenseless in a world full of neighbors and noise.

> Our friend in Chicago, /Miss Repplier was a life-long resident of Philadelphia/ with the telephone at his elbow, might as well live in the next street. Better, perhaps, for we can still close our doors, though this we feel to be but a temporary refuge. The future scientist will no doubt devise a method whereby walls shall no longer conceal, and at any moment of the day or night pursuing acquaintances may press a button and behold us shrinking in our lair.
>
> As for those malignant instruments which hoard and multiply noises, the degradation of mankind will be eventually traced to their agency. A thing of evil is a curse forever when science gives it immortality.[2]

Still, some noise Miss Repplier found to be pleasant, and she counted it a poor town that never rejoiced with some sort of festivity and pageantry at least occasionally. In 1908 she observed that while Pittsburgh was busy erecting courts of honor and triumphal arches because it was one hundred and fifty years old, Philadelphia was spending all the money it could borrow to give the biggest birthday celebration of the season. However, on both occasions scientific malevolence was again at work, she reported, this time in the matter of illumination. "Both cities were fatally munificent. Not one ugly feature of some phenomenally ugly building was permitted to escape the ruthless glare of electricity."[3]

By 1910 the subject had still not exhausted itself, nor had Miss

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[2]Repplier, "Scientific Malevolence," XXXVIII (September 27, 1906), 338.

[3]Repplier, "Anniversaries," V (October 22, 1908), 543.

Repplier's opinion changed even one iota. She shared by then the added viewpoint of popular distrust for the automobile which was frequently being seen on the streets of well-paved cities. There it was beginning to find a limited employment by sharing with the horse the delivery service of department stores, and there it was beginning to compete with the new obsolete hansom and closed cab as a public conveyance.

Pedestrians, said Miss Repplier, were constantly being run down by "well-meaning but unskilled motormen," and, what is more, pedestrians were constantly being pursued gleefully by automobiles because the policemen who should have been protecting citizens were busy elsewhere. Her final anathema was summed up in one sentence: "If that witless philosopher who said, 'Give me the lusuries of life and I will dispense with its necessities,' lived in Philadelphia he would find himself taken at his word."[4]

The student of Miss Repplier's seeking for a clue to serve as a possible guide to these convictions would do well to compare her mood with that of T. S. Eliot at a later date, when her dire predictions were already realities:

> The endless cycle of idea and action,
> Endless invention, endless experiment,
> Brings knowledge of lmotion, but not of stillness;
> Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
> Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
> All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
> All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
> But nearness toddeath no nearer to God.
> Where is the life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
> The Cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
> Bring us farther from God and nearer to Dust.[5]

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[4]Repplier, "Work and Play," LV (April 7, 1910), 627.

[5]T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950, p. 96.

Closely allied to this detestation for noise was Miss Repplier's conviction that essentially life was dull, and that dullness was a trait well worth cultivation.

In spite of its now historic references her essay on the subject itself is timeless in the application of its principle.

> ... Pick up the dictionary of quotations, look for the word "dull" or "dullness," and read the columns of caustic witticisms levelled at this basic quality of human nature, this mighty preservative which has saved for us the civilization of the world. The strong nations have been dull nations. Greece died of its intellect, but Rome lives and lives. From her came staple laws, and a dull habit of obeying them. From her came that triumphant epitome of all dullness, family life. ...
>
> ... It was not dullness which threatened the financial ruin of the country with the mysterious and memorable words: "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." It was not dullness which sailed over the sea with a select party of ladies and gentlemen, and asked the nations of Europe to oblige them by stopping the war. ... It is not dullness today which proffers schemes for the wrecking of American railroads, and for the abolishment of American babies; or which invites us--through psychic channels--to while away our hours in the restricted companionship of the dead.
>
> The wise men of the world are very few, the fools are very many; but the dull are the dykes which save us all from the frothy seas of folly. Their healthy inattention is our refuge from the sputtering eloquence of Madison Square, the bray of the Bolshevist and bomb-thrower, the pervasive errors of the well-informed. Let us be grateful while we live for the worth of our neighbors' dullness, refraining from the sin of envy and from the base flattery of imitation.[6]

Another thought, related closely enough to be considered as relevant, is to be found in Miss Repplier's convincing essay entitled "Fame." The impetus for this particular essay was a statement by Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman in which he expressed a most serious concern (now justified) over the exclusion of Edgar Allan Poe and James Fenimore Cooper from the New York Hall of Fame. Miss Repplier declined to comment on the two authors themselves, but she took the opportunity to point out that it is hard work marking the boundary lines of fame, and that some critics

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[6]Repplier, "The Worth of Dullness," LXXIX (June 29, 1922), 14.

in England were wondering if the recent burst of enthusiasm over Mark Twain, in their land, wasn't being a trifle overdone. These critics, she reported, were now asking sourly if A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, really represented Oxford's cherished ideals, and why a seat of learning (she presumed Oxford was a seat of learning) had passed by a score of American scholars to bestow her highest honors on our great American joker. Sagely she observed:

> Happily no one is better or worse for these discriminating tokens of regard. It is a good thing to be carved in stone, and have sparrows housekeeping on your head, but it won't make the world remember you. It is a hard thing to be turned down by a board of electors from a Hall of Fame, but it won't make the world forget you.[7]

A little earlier she had noted that a serious effort was being made to determine the authorship of the famous classic, "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Surely, she remarked, that if the authoress had known what a masterpiece she was creating, she would never have left to posterity the task of proving it was hers. "Claimants to the honor have found the field a free one, and, so far, no cypher has been discovered to elucidate the mystery."[8]

This desire for fame and consequent exultation of the individual made the age one of specialization. Dr. Charles William Eliot of Harvard measured the nation's intellect with his five-foot shelves of books which were the progenitors of the "Great Books" of our own day. However, he was not always accepted kindly. Fame being a commodity of prized value, few specialists were willing to relinquish their ever so small lease on it.

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[7]Repplier, "Fame," L (October 24, 1907), 489.

[8]Repplier, "Mary's Lamb," XXXXIII (June 16, 1904), 597.

> There seems to be a general impression on the part of specialists that Dr. Charles William Eliot has touched unduly upon their specialties, and that his counsel, so freely imparted to an erring world, is beginning to savour of omniscience. It was a rational effort on his part to direct our reading, and the books he recommended --though few of us could grasp the principle on which they were selected--are certainly better than those which Mr. Roosevelt urged from time to time upon his reluctant people. ... But clergymen of all denominations are of the opinion that they know more about religion, its influence and efficacy than does a talented layman; financiers consider themselves better fitted than is a college president to grapple with corporate industries; and labor-leaders, stung into anger by a few plain truths, are protesting bitterly that it is to them, and not to a scholar and a theorist that workmen must turn for aid...[9]

Dr. Eliot's experiment was followed by a recurrent itch of list-making which soon infected the public mind. When an innocent Chilean lady (Miss Repplier does not name her) asked the National League of Woman Voters to name the twelve greatest women in the United States, the League, commented Miss Repplier, did not name them but everyone else did.

This was followed by the Woman's Universal Alliance's wish to know who had been the twenty-five greatest women of New York. Confining the lists to the illustrious dead quieted the heart-burnings of the illustrious living, Miss Repplier noted, and then continued her report.

> An Historical Research Committee of one hundred citizens of New York will sit in judgment on the lists submitted; and the chosen names will be engraved on a tablet, not yet designed, to be placed on the walls of a Temple of Womanhood, not yet built, in Washington....
>
> Seventy-eight years lie before us in which to tranquilly select the most uplifting man of the twentieth century who will fill the last remaining niche in the parapet of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York. ...
>
> As a finality, Mr. Wells has furnished us with a list of the five greatest men who ever lived, a list remarkable for its elimination of Caesar. Mr. Wells has not yet forgiven this transcendent genius his frivolous fancy for Cleopatra.[10]

Another indication of the nation's fervor for specialization which

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[9]Repplier, "Specialism," IV (January 6, 1910), 17.

[10]Repplier, "Lists," LXXX (October 11, 1911), 9.

led to group acceptance was the novelty of conventions. Every year, reported Miss Repplier, these conventions were growing bigger and more varied. With unrestrained hyperbole she noted that doctors left their patients to die without their aid, while they read papers to any other doctors who could be persuaded to listen; mothers abandoned their families in order to teach other mothers the sacred duties of maternity; and humanitarians traveled hundreds of miles to dispute with other humanitarians the best ways of badgering the poor. All of it was to her common-sense view nothing more than comedy--brought about by the gregariousness of human nature which prompts mankind to move in squadrons and to cheerfully endure the discomforts and stupidities which are the twin adjuncts of a crowd.[11]

When busy Americans of the first decade of the twentieth century were not convention-bound, they were often home-bound, and this familiar scene did not escape Miss Repplier's observation. In an essay entitled "Are We Polite?" she recalled that a short time ago Mr. Hopkinsom Smith, that famous novelist of the era, had written a story to prove that "the Republic of the United States" was a polite nation. Mr. Smith's proof for this assertion was the "exceeding" kindness of a rough man in his own family and his "exceeding" integrity in commercial and political life. These things, said Mr. Hopkinson Smith, made a gentleman, and to this Miss Repplier made reply.

> Yet the fact remains that a most devoted husband and father, hurrying madly off a ferryboat-which is not, as one might suppose, on fire--will jostle me as unconcernedly as though he were a domestic tyrant; a pure-souled patriot will shove me as ruthlessly from a railway wicket as though he were a member of Councils. The supercilious hotel clerk may, for all I know, be the support of his widowed

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[11]Repplier, "Comedy of Conventions," L(July 4, 1907), 6.

> mother, and a shining beacon in Sunday-school; but his virtues are not reflected in his manners, and it is with his manners after all, and not with his virtues, that I am immediately concerned.
>
> For if we were a polite nation, then would all officials and employes betray some of the national politeness. The person from whom I buy my theatre ticket would not be so sulking about selling them. ... The railway clerk, from whom I am obliged to purchase a ticket to New York, would not, were he truly polite, evince such unwillingness to part with it. ...
>
> On the same principle, I fail to see why a man should deliberately select to serve in a bureau of information, if he be so constitutionally adverse to answering questions that he cannot do so with civility. Granted that answering questions is the least amusing occupation in the world. Granted that it is not diverting to spend one's days in setting flurried travelers straight. ... But then we clearly understand that the bureau of information has been established to meet these inquiries, and not to serve as a tub for an official Diogenes who resents intrusion upon his solitude....[12]

Concern over the nation's politeness, or lack of it, gave way to other preoccupations; for example, the selection of a national emblem--what was the proper way of saying it with flowers? The selection of floral emblems became a delicate and difficult task. Competition ran high. In 1923 Miss Repplier wrote that for the past decade, state legislators from time to time had been putting aside trivialities, like schools, and taxes and Prohibition enforcement laws, to turn their attention to really serious problems like choosing a state or national flower. There was a time, she recalled, when a great body of Americans put forward with anguished intensity the claim of the goldenrod to be our national flower because it grew everywhere, while a steady opposition held out for the Columbine because it was spelt like--or nearly like--Columbia.

With a delicate play of irony she pointed out that when Georgia selected the Cherokee rose as its state flower, the press of the country unanimously applauded her choice, while a few people who had chanced to

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[12]Repplier, "Are We Polite?" XXXIX (January 3, 1901), 14.

read American history, thought that the name "Cherokee" was the word of all words Georgia would have preferred to forget.

However, the problem of emblematic flowers was once more raised to a national level with the advent of Mother's Day--

> That Mother's Day should be represented by a white carnation, and Decoration Day by a poppy seems right enough. ... But now comes along Miss Jarvis, who invented Mother's Day, and who wants to bar the carnation because of profiteering florists. Following her comes Dr. Lewis Battle, who wants to bar the poppy because narcotics can be made from it, and because red is unfortunately the color of blood.
>
> It suggests battle and carnage rather than sweetness and light. These are painful perplexities. What about the dandelion for Mother's Day? It would be hard to corner the dandelion market in May. As for the poppy--well, if the soldiers whose graves we decorate had shrunk too sensitively from the color of blood, there would be no Decoration Day. The Southern States would have peacefully seceded, Germany would have peacefully occupied the United States, and we should all be living in clover.
>
> Happy thought. Why not the clover, emblem of prosperity, to stand for everything?[13]

Even graver than the problem of a fitting emblematic flower for Mother's Day was the evolution of curious anachronisms which the observance of this day gave rise to. Sympathetic shopkeepers, mindful of sentiment but forgetful of the new progress, said Miss Repplier, harked back to the time of the prairie schooner, the old oaken bucket, and the venerated armchair, to the age when mothers were elderly at forty, aged at fifty, had silvery hair, and darned innumerable socks. But, she asked, was there in the length and breadth of the United States a man then living who still associated his mother with silver spectacles or a spinning wheel? Certainly not! When Miss Anna Jarvis proposed in 1925 that a monument be erected in Washington to "The Woman with the Apron" Miss Repplier queried: "Why the apron?" and then went on to expostulate--

The sacredness of motherhood does not depend on aprons. It ante-

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[13]Repplier, "Saying it With Flowers," LXXXII (July 12, 1923), 12.

> dated them, and it will perchance survive them. The world moves, and mothers move with it. If the good son of 1925 wishes to keep the tenth of May, let him send his youthful mother a new tennis racket, or new golf clubs, or some silk stockings or silver slippers (instead of spectacles), or pearly earrings, or the latest in bridge tables, or a wallet to hold her winnings, or a check to pay her losses. We are as sentimental as ever we were, but fashions in mothers change.[14]

Golf, the new national sport was not confined to the mothers--up-to-date--or the golf course, for that matter. It had, Miss Repplier took notice, inspired a school of fiction, a school of verse, a school of profanity, second only to the language of the sea, and wholly unfit for the lips of immaturity. Furthermore, it had its collections of thrice-told tales, and an array of legends, showing that heaven and hell were equally interested in the sport. The devil had been known to play a round on Scottish links, using the handle of his cotton umbrella for a club. An expert golfer challenged him and won the souls of four dead comrades--damned for swearing (probably at golf) from his clutches. Meanwhile, in heaven it was pleasant to record that it was a point of honor among the saints to bar all miraculous strokes. The Contest being one of skill, not saintliness, they took for their motto: "No miracles among friends."

However, the strangest phenomenon of the nation's fancy, was according to Mark Sullivan, an interest in dogs. Oddly enough, the public seemed to delight in the illusion that the possession of a dog made it assume the nationality of its owner. All of which led her to remark, "It is sad to see an animal surrender its broad and splendid freedom to become a little four-footed Scotchman or Celt, but this malleability explains the affection which man, the egotist, feels for his imitator."[15]

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[14]Repplier, "Mothers Up To Date," LXXXV (May 7, 1925), 6.

[15]Repplier, "Man's Friend the Dog," XXXX (July 31, 1902), 98.

Vivisection, always a favorite crusade of the editor of Life, presented a less pleasing picture of the American pre-occupation with animals. With an unusual amount of acerbity, Miss Repplier took to task the zealous teacher who said "give me a cat and a jack-knife, and I will teach my class more physiology in an hour than they can learn from books in a month."

A cat and a jack-knife (even when the cat was to be chloroformed) did not in her opinion, nor in the outraged opinion of many parents, commend themselves pleasantly as affording a healthy spectacle for children's eyes. Furthermore, she rightly anticipated that in such procedures, there is always a painful possibility that other lessons, not intended, might be taught by this advanced method of illustration.

Less brutal but nonetheless appalling was the astonishing statement of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's that animals do not necessarily die, that dogs, cats, cows and horses may be found, according to Doyle, in that other world which used to be called Heaven or Hell, but which the enlightened year of 1922 designated as the higher and lower plane. In one or two of these planes, observed Miss Repplier, Sir Arthur must have spent a good deal of time during the last few years when he was erroneously thought to be a resident of earth. She further noted that his information concerning these planes was not of that casual kind which is gleaned from hearsay and car windows. Now was it in the least like the information which visiting Englishmen print in books after they have spent three months in the United States.

> It is minute, diversified, exhaustive, the fruit of close and familiar observation. It is the "oldest inhabitant" speaking with authority to the stranger at the gates.
>
> Therefore we cannot doubt Sir Arthur has seen the children who grow up, and the old men and women who grow young, and the celestial

> divorce courts whence incompatible husbands and wives are dispatched to more sympathetic circles, and the dogs and cats and cows that waves of love have wafted into the Beyond. This last is a disturbing thought. I know that my earthly neighbor loves her little Pomeranian which yaps for hours in her back-yard as well as I love my roving cat which spends his nights in jousts and tournaments on my back fence. But I do not love her dog, and she does not love my cat, and neither of us is enamoured of cows, whether in fields of daisies or of asphodel.
>
> ... We are uneasy about the "requiescat in pace," which is the one boon which outworn creeds promise to tired souls.[16]

In regard to Spiritualism itself, Miss Repplier believed that it had accomplished nothing as a religion except to add a fresh horror to death. Many horrors had already been added to death, long before the advent of Spiritualism, by devout believers in the "immortal gloom," but neither Dante nor Calvin conceived of anything so degrading as a medium's parlor. The devastating thought that she might some night find herself "dodging around a darkened room talking twaddle and answering A-B-C questions on a slate," was much too painful a reflection for Miss Repplier to endure. Dying, she held, is after all, a private affair; "And even a disembodied spirit has rights one should respect."[17]

Death is certain, she bravely admitted, and badgered the Socialist, Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson, who had come forward with the problem "Is Immortality Desirable?" The old, simple notion that if we believed in a hereafter we had better prepare for it, and if we didn't believe in it, that we had better prepare anyhow, on the chance that there might be one, found no favor, according to Miss Repplier, in Mr. Dickinson's eyes. Yet, even he had tacitly to admit that the choice did not lie with us, nor was he able to suggest any method, to her satisfaction, of getting rid of death.

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[16]Repplier, "The Everlasting Beasts," LXXIX (June 22, 1922), 8.

[17]Repplier, "The Story of Death," L (August 15, 1907), 204.

But, she conceded, we could make up our minds as to its desirability, if we deemed our decision of value. For her part, the arguments which Mr. Dickinson advanced in behalf of his somewhat nebulous views held a rather ominous reference to the "scientific method and critical faculty" of the Society for Psychical Research, which chilled the blood in her veins.

> Die we must. All of us admit that, and few of us regret the necessity. But we draw the line at performing any ghostly antics afterwards. If we are to leave our dignified darkness in order to rap senilities, by the grace of a supersensitive medium, for the enlightenment of the Society for Psychical Research, the question "Is Immortality Desirable?" is all too quickly answered.[18]

With more leisure on their hands than ever before, Americans of the twentieth century came to find more and more enjoyment in attending the public theatres. The radio had not yet come to dominate the home, and television was not even guessed at.

Eager to be assured of large ticket returns, enterprising managers sought and often obtained, the endorsement of their plays by sending tickets to the clergy. In 1902 one such neat little book had been compiled and circulated concerning the play "The Bonnie Brier Bush." Twenty pastors and one pastoress had written enthusiastic letters expressing their delight at this moral performance, and incidentally thanking the management for sending them their tickets. A devout believer in the function of the drama to entertain and not to moralize, Miss Repplier, irritated at this latest proof of ingenuity in what she termed "the golden age of advertising," made a bold suggestion: "It would be but a fair requital if the grateful actors would say a few words on Saturday nights in praise of the sermons which their clerical supporters are going to preach the next day. One good turn manifestly deserves another."[19]

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[18]Repplier, "Hereafter," LIII (June 3, 1909), 763.

[19]Repplier, "With Benefit of Clergy," XXIX (February 17, 1902), 175.

In regard to the censhorship of plays, in general, an essay provoked by the ban upon the "Mikado" in England caused Miss Repplier to remark concerning our own country that we, in this land of Freedom have no official censor, but that we have so many sensitive interests to be offended that "providing dramas for the American public is like a species of egg-dance."

She observed that even in tranquil Philadelphia the negroes had driven one melodrama from the stage after another and that a performance of "A Blot on the Scutcheon" by the Browning Society had filled the air with the "virtuous protests of the scandalized." In the meantime, "Advanced Vaudeville" had taken possession of the land, and apparently was giving universal satisfaction.

> Here at least is a panacea for all evils. Here is a pastime which pleases everybody. When, in the spring, the glad news passed from town to town that a young Englishwoman was coming to sing us "Never Introduce a Bloke to Your Lady Friend," we knew that, even if the obsolete drama vanished from the stage, we should still be left the intellectual pleasures of the music hall.[20]

There was something fundamentally ironic about this success of vaudeville, running parallel as it did, to the restriction of serious drama like the works of Ibsen and Maeterlinck. The joys of censorship, Miss Repplier concluded, were few and it was difficult not to sympathize with an official whose duties were so onerous and so unpopular. Such an official certainly did not enjoy reading plays, "breaking stones or picking oakum would be preferable as an occupation; and unless a man be a born dictator, ready and eager--like Mr. Roosevelt--to decide all things for everybody, it must be keenly disagreeable to shoulder the moral responsibilities of playgoers. With one-half of the public mocking at his pro-

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[20]Repplier, "The Nursery Governess," L (August 1, 1907), 146.

priety and the other half scandalized by his laxity, the censor's life is not a happy one."[21]

On the other hand, Miss Repplier was quick to retaliate when she felt that dramatic critics were attempting to "enlighten our ignorance." She observed that an overpowering gloom was beginning to assail the critics when they contemplated the degeneracy of the drama or the intellectual limitations of the average American audience.

> A recent writer in the Outlook accuses New York Theatregoers of unadulterated imbecility. They fail to see a humorous point when it is presented; but they atone for this deficiency by greeting serious and even tragic situations with "irrelevant and irreverent laughter. ... It is in the inept, mistaken mirth of a New York audience that the lowest ebb of intelligence is betrayed."
>
> This sounds appalling, and if it were not for the comfortable margin that lies between a statement and a fact we should wonder why so many good actors are keen to play in the metropolis. ...
>
> As for missing the drolleries of a play, it may safely be said that the humor which the public does not see is not there to be seen...[22]

A popular interest in the comedies of Shakespeare during this period led very frequently to the abridgement of his plays, a practice Miss Repplier found little sanction for.

> Shakespeare, in common with other playwrights, started a drama on its way by opening up a situation, which he afterwards developed to a climax ... he explained coherently in "As You Like It" why all the characters had gone to the Forest of Arden, before he showed us what they did there; he explained coherently in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" why the quartette of lovers have fled to the Grecian woods, before he showed us the strange mishaps which befell them. A continuity of purpose makes clear to our perceptions the shifting scenes portrayed.
>
> Mr. Greet's company, in its open-air reproductions of Shakespeare's comedies on the grounds of the University of Pennsylvania, took the bold step of eliminating all these lucid explanations. Now matter how Rosalind got to Arden. No matter why she went. The courtship could begin. No matter why Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena

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[21]Repplier, "The Joys of Censorship," L (December 5, 1907), 685.

[22]Repplier, "The Stage and the Audience," LVII (January 16, 1911), 109.

were all roaming at midnight,
"a league without the town."
There they were, to their own discomfort, and the manifest bewilderment of at least part of the audience.[23]

Equally annoying to her scholarly mind was the frequent unreliability of facts in historical plays. One author who incessantly annoyed her was the French writer Sardou. A few years before he had presented to theatre-goers of two continents a Dante "unknown alike to historians or to students; a middle-aged, melancholy madcap who spends his time bolting into convents, frightening nuns, and playing sportive but feeble tricks--of the spiritualistic seance order--upon an unenlightened public." Now, fumed Miss Repplier, he had the affront to present Cardinal Ximenes as a "pattering old dotard, devoting himself, his church and his country to the destruction of one insignificant female." She wondered why Sardou hadn't taken the industrious Torquemada for his tool, who was a notorious villain, in his effort to use the Spanish Inquisition for cheap fireworks. As it was, Sardou's production could not to her mind be called in any sense of the word a triumph of art. When he had purposely distorted history to villify "the keenest thinker, the noblest worker, and the greatest statesman of his age into something too foolish to be feared, and too bad to be forgiven."[24]

The quest of the modern stage was to discover how far the unrealities of the stage admitted of realism, but with a nostalgic longing Miss Repplier observed that the elderly theatre-goers were beginning to look back with something like regret upon the loud-voiced ranting of their youth, and upon the days when "Forrest bellowed his noble rage, and expired

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[23]Repplier, "Scenes from Shakespeare," XXXXIII (June 23, 1904), 611.

[24]Repplier, "Historical Plays," XXXXV (February 2, 1905), 141.

like a whole army in its death-throes."

Concerning the modern stage she set up a hypothetical situation and a comparison of the old with the new.

> Suppose a son wishes to make a confidential communication to his mother. It isn't natural for him to turn his back upon his parent and speak loudly and articulately into space. But then, neither is it natural for a confidential communication to be casually overheard by six hundred people ... our memories stray fondly back to the stage robber of other days, who vociferated to his comrades: "Hist! a sound and we are lost!" in tones that would have awakened a sleeping deaf and dumb asylum, but which only the audience heard."[25]

The views of Mr. Bellew of Philadelphia on realism in drama provoked further comment from Miss Repplier. "To succeed now," Mr. Bellew had said, "a play must incorporate one original and practical idea. It must be a reflection of truth itself, devoid of theatrical artifices, and developed along the rigid lines of sincerity." Miss Repplier wondered what successes of the past five years Mr. Bellew had had in mind when he spoke. She wondered, too, if the public could endure a reflection of life itself on the stage, or if the absence of theatrical artifices would not leave them gasping and forlorn.

> Certainly the artifices employed in "The Thief" are of an engagingly transparent nature; while the genlemanly detective, whose profession nobody suspects, and the self-immolating lover who, to save the heroine's reputation, confesses a crime which he has not committed, are characters endeared to us by the intimacy of a lifetime. It is the same charm of the familiar which makes us hail in "The Man from Home" our dear old friend, the villain, who has stolen his friend's money, stolen his friend's wife, and betrayed his friend to the Russian police--a glorious triplet of crimes attainable only on the stage ...[26]

Other evidences of advanced business methods, aside from indorsement of plays by the clergy mentioned earlier, were to be found in the

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[25]Repplier, "Then and Now," XXXVI (November 30, 1905), 636.

[26]Repplier, "The Play's the Thing," LIII (March 4, 1909), 300.

hitherto conservative field of literature. One new method was the quickly popular literary lottery which published a dozen short stories unsigned and offered a thousand dollars for the best guess at authorship. To Miss Repplier, this was a daring innovation in letters which gave a new and dazzling interest to well-worn fiction, besides adding zest to the dull business of reading. The wonder of the scheme was so simple and so well devised that she marvelled that it had never before dawned on the commercial mind.

Another variation was to select five passages from ten novels, "a sort of literary hunt-the-slipper." Competitors were bidden to say in which of the ten books the five quotations occurred.

"Is it possible that even in these hard times men and women can be found willing to read ten novels for five dollars?" asked the amazed Miss Repplier. "Can we think without compassion of a fellow creature tracking such a sentence as, 'I am personally of the opinion that they do these things better in the Fiji Islands,' through nine fat volumes, only to find it lurking in the tenth?"[27]

Prizes were the order of the day, but the most ingenious device, to her mind, was that adopted by a Philadelphia department store which advertised itself as inviting twenty Philadelphia clergymen to go as its guests to the St. Louis Fair in 1904.

These reverend gentlemen were to be elected by the votes of the community, every patron of the store--no matter how small his purchase--being entitled to a ballot. She hoped there would be a few conservatives who felt that this sort of advertising belittled holy orders and insulted religion and that some enterprising shopkeeper wouldn't be proposing the

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[27]Repplier, "The Way to Wealth," LIV (May 6, 1910), 616.

following winter to send seven bishops to the circus.[28]

In 1925 she commented on the fact that so many prizes had been given to poets, that far from being the starvelings of literature, they were fast becoming its plutocrats. Artists were equally fortunate ever since the happy discovery had been made that anyone could paint or draw.

Furthermore, every twelve months a fresh crop of heroes and heroines went forward to claim the Carnegie prize, it being an age, not unlike our own, when "there is no stage of incompetence which does not meet with liberal encouragements and remuneration."

Why not, she suggested, offer a few first class prizes for deeds of difficulty and daring, or for those supreme renunciations which will delight and benefit the world? These were her choices and quite accurately they sum up her final estimation of the age.

Journalistic Prize
To be awarded to any newspaper, daily or weekly which suffers the 22nd of February to pass without a reference to the hatchet and cherry-tree incident.

Cartoonist Prize
To be awarded to any humorous artist who ventures to draw a profiteer with a thin wife or a ward politician without a cigar; and who succeeds in making these unlabeled types recognizable to the public.

Social Service Prize
To be awarded to any social worker who for six consecutive months has abstained from using the words "uplift" and "efficiency."

Cinema Prize
To be awarded to any screen actress who for a calendar year permits her mouth to remain the shape which nature designed a human mouth to be.[29]

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[28]Repplier, "In Forma Pauperis," XXXXIV (September 29, 1904), 301.

[29]Repplier, "Ever Grateful For the Prize," LXXXV (May 14, 1925), 11.

CONCLUSION

This then is the picture of Miss Repplier during the years 1893-1925 as she is mirrored in her own essays written for Life, that gallant satirical weekly whose gay masthead read "where there is Life there is hope."

However, it is not the entire picture, for her work of the next quarter of the century continued to catch the lights and shadows of the American scene and to blend them into one harmonious whole.

Her point of view was always conservative, but it is well to point out that in her case the word "conservative" was never identified with the now historical political term "standpatter." Quite the opposite is true, for she herself wrote:

> If belief in the perfectibility of man--and not of man only, but of governments--is the inspiration of liberalism, of radicalism, of the spirit that calls clamorously for change, and that has requisitioned the words 'reform' and 'progress', then sympathy with man and with his work, with the beautiful and imperfect things he has made of the chequered centuries, is the keynote of conservatism.[1]

Merle Curti in The Growth of American Thought has observed that with her charming irony Miss Repplier poked fun at the zeal for change which the Progressives cherished, but that

> the dignity of the individual, irrespective of his outward condition; the universality of honor; the solace of religion

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[1]Repplier, "Consolations of the Conservatives," Atlantic Monthly, CXXIV (Dec., 1919), 760.

> and of the memories of a great past--these Miss Repplier wove into so delicate a defense of the status quo that it could hardly be recognized as such and probably was never consciously and explicitly so regarded by that charming Philadelphia lady. Agnes Repplier's graceful pen and wit spoke only for a small intellectual aristocracy. ...Thus a 'defense' was developed which identified the conservative values and interests not with the theory of an elitd, but with the doctrine that success is open to all alike.[2]

Her perfect candor, tempered by a tolerant and half-amused insight into what she often termed the "pardonable foibles of humanity" accounts to some large measure for her success as a social critic.

As one thoughtful observer of her work has judiciously remarked: "Her personality appears transparently in her writings, and the reader perceives that her success as an essayist is a success of character."[3]

Another comments: "Miss Repplier has taken small pains to hide the many disenchantments which come to any thoughtful observer of life, but she believes that the 'wit and wisdom of humanity are permanent'. She herself has been a memorable example of this wisdom and this wit."[4]

When the exigency of the family had demanded that she work, she turned to the one art she knew--that of writing. "I had nothing to say but I spent a great deal of time in learning how to say it well," she wryly remarked several years later about the situation. However, before long she did have something to say and the subscribers to Life turned attentively to hear her.

> Mr. Mitchell said truly that no pessimist could run a humorous journal. It takes a deal of courage as well as a deal of fun. Not

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[2](New York, 1943), p. 644.

[3]Kunitz and Haycraft, op. cit., 1611

[4]Matthew Hoehn, Catholic Authors, p. 643.

> the 'meaningless and derisive laugh' which Henry Adams charged against American society, but the gay jest aimed at folly, the sharp jest aimed at wrong, are Life's contribution to the art of living.[5]

At one time or another she took a careful and accurate aim at all the major social aberrations which beset American democracy in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Her satire was pungent, rich, and varied, blended with urbanity, and written with a French incisiveness of phrase. Her work manifested one of the finest examples in America of restraint tempered with humor--a mental balance made possible because she never solely concentrated on any single issue. "I have never aspired to be a bulwark of any cause, have never felt myself needed in any field. I have been as mere laborer in the trenches, with no nobler motive underlying my daily toil than the desire to be self-supporting in a clean and reputable fashion."[6]

Only once did she depart from this stricture of discipline she imposed upon her writing. For it was to be expected that the first World War, with its disturbing threats to civilization, should stir to the depths so responsive a social critic.

> Her European traditions, her American loyalties, her convictions that were as the breath of life, were vitally engaged by things said and done on both sides of the Atlantic, and the essays in Counter Currents (1916) revealed the drift of her interest from the sphere of American social aberrations to disputed aspects of the tragedy which darkened the world. Temporarily the war took its toll: it quenched her humor, sharpened her irony into acerbity and kindled a scorn and indignation which consumed restraint. To say this is not to condemn Miss Repplier but to record that among the evils of war is that of enticing the Muses into the train of Mars....[7]

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[5] Repplier, "Birthdays," LXXXI (Jan. 4, 1923), 4.

[6] Repplier, "Catholicism and Authorship," Catholic World, LXXXX (Nov. 1909), 174.

[7] Reilly, "Daughter of Addison," Catholic World, CXLVIII (Nov. 1938), 166.

Gradually, however, Miss Repplier returned to her role of social critic, her wit recaptured, her irony purged, her method of revitalizing the past as a norm for evaluating the present resumed again, and her concern restored in the social shortcomings of the day.

Agnes Repplier died on December 15, 1950. Time magazine, with its customary alacrity and conscientiousness, informed its vast literate public of her death in this wise:

> "Milestones"
> Died. Agnes Repplier, 95, leading U. S. woman essayist; in Philadelphia. A cat-loving, chain-smoking spinster, she began writing at 30. [Actually it was at 20.][8] To U. S. readers who never put much store by the polite, personal essay, she managed to convey the impression that she was from another country. But she acquired an audience that remained fond of her well-bred talent for taking graceful potshots at vafied targets.

Newsweek, with its usual telegraphic brevity and time-consciences was even more restrined and cryptic:

> Agnes Repplier, 95, dean of American essayists (Time and Tendencies and the Fireside Sphinx), longtime contributor to the Atlantic Monthly; of a heart ailment, in Philadelphia, Dec. 15.

Thus was summed up her three-scored career.

One presumes that it was due to an enforced economy of space that no mention was made of even the singular honors bestowed upon Miss Repplier during her longevity.

In virtue of her literary proficiency, as early as 1902 the University of her natal city, Philadelphia, had awarded her an honorary degree. This was followed in 1911 by the Laetare Medal, the highest nonor conferred by the University of Notre Dame. In 1925 Yale conferred the Doctor of Laws degree upon her, the University's first woman recipient. Columbia University gave recognition of her merit in 1927. Marquette and

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[8]Stokes, Agnes Repplier, p..42.

Princeton followed suit later, as did the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

One regrets, too, that no mention was made of Miss Repplier's Catholicism, or of her pre-eminence in the difficult field of modern hagiography.

Absent also was any mention of her fine discriminating taste, her rich illuminations, and her delicate sensibilities in matters literary. Yet, how many other modern essayists can lay claim to steady publications for a decade more than a half century in such outstanding periodicals as The Atlantic Monthly, Scribners, Century, North American Review, The Nation, American Mercury, Harper's Weekly, The Catholic World, Commonweal, and Life, the progenitor of the modern magazine bearing the same title?

Time failed, too, to note the excellence of her work which was due in no small part to her adroitness in never mistaking the absolute for the debatable, a practice she flayed in such essays as "Fiction in the Pulpit."

> It is not the office of a novelist to show us how to behave ourselves; it is not the business of fiction to teach us anything. Scientific truths, new forms of religion, the humorous eccentricities of socialism, the countless fads of radical reformers, the proper way to live our own lives--these matters, which are not objects of such tender regard to the storyteller, form no part of his rightful stock-in-trade. His task is simply to give us pleasure, and his duty is to give it within the not very Puritanical limits prescribed by our modern notions of decency.
>
> If he chooses to overstep these limits, an offense against propriety, it is exasperating to have him defended on the score of an ethical purpose, and an offense against art; for there is nothing so hopelessly inartistic as to represent the world as worth more than it is, or to express a too vehement dissatisfaction with the men who dwell in it. Art is never didactic, does not take kindly to facts, is helpless to grapple with theories, and is killed outright by a sermon.[9]

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[9]Repplier, Points of View, p. 113.

Likewise, on provocation, she could be equally as adamant in defending the prerogatives of religion. "Without the vast compelling presence of God, the activities of men grow feverish," she sagely observed. Disdaining the lack of self-assertiveness, the paucity of Catholic authors, and genuine Catholic scholarship, in the United States, she made bold challenge:

> Let him, the Catholic Writer in Crashaw's phrase, strike for the pure intelligential prey' and see to what heights professing to be just what he is, he can rise. ... I have never in all these years found it necessary to ignore, much less conceal, my faith. I could not if I would. When faith is the most vital thing in life, when it is the source of our widest sympathies and of our deepest feelings, when we owe to it whatever distinction of mind and harmony of soul we possess,we cannot push it intentionally out of sight without growing flat and dry through insincerity.[10]

However, she was not essentially a protagonist in the affairs of the spirit, and her most successful religious writing was inspirational rather than controversial.

Her early range, which included poetry, essay and fiction, was extended in later life in such fine biographies as Pere Marquette; Priest, Pioneer and Adventurer (1929), Mere Marie of the Ursulines; A Study in Adventure,(1931), and Junipero Serra, Pioneer Colonist of California (1933). Each of these volumes as it was published was generously applauded by the secular and Catholic press alike for the precedent it set in modern hagiography. But the conquest had been long in the making. In an early essay entitled "Goodness and Gayety," Miss Repplier had spoken out sharply against the besetting sin of most religious biographers--"The pious and popular custom of chopping up human records into

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[10]Repplier, "Catholicism and Authorship," The Catholic World, LXXXX (November, 1909), 174.

lessons for the devout."

> It is so much the custom to obliterate from religious memoirs all vigorous human traits, all incidents which do not tend to edification, and all contemporary criticism which cannot be smoothed into praise, that what is left seems to the disheartened reader only a pale shadow of life. It is hard to make any biography illustrate a theme, or prove an argument; and the process by which such results are obtained is so artificial as to be open to the charge of untruth ... the sinners of the world stand out clear, distinct, full of vitality, and of an engaging candor. The saints of Heaven shine dimly through a nebulous haze of hagiology. ... We may be edified or we may be sceptical, according to our temperament and training; but a profound unconcern devitalizes both scepticism and edification. What have we mortals in common with these perfected prodigies of grace?[11]

Nevertheless, unintentionally one suspects, Time magazine did a great service by establishing Miss Repplier as a social critic. For as Joseph Reilly, the first to identify Miss Repplier as Addison's daughter, reminds us:

> Social criticism has become a leaden-footed vagrant whose proper domain has been usurped by economics, sociology, science, and a type of ethics so highly personal that sanctions and standards know it no longer ... the critic who is true to the tradition must substitute reason for emotion and either avoid open didacticism or, in Addison's phrase, 'temper it with wit' ... to write in this tradition is not easy; on the contrary it is enormously difficult ... it means keeping with-in a given domain, preserving a point of view, employing reasoned and tested standards, holding fast to urbanity, maintaining at least the appearance of detachment, rejecting scorn, abuse, exhortation, and ridicule as weapons and employing a humor that is never wry, an irony that is never bitter, a tolerance that never degenerates into indifference.[12]

Such a writer was Agnes Repplier. As a social critic she viewed the cherished foibles of mankind with a sane geniality which bespoke at once the happy equilibrium of her common sense and christian orthodoxy.

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[11]Repplier, "Goodness and Gayety," A Century of the Catholic Essay, 28.

[12]Reilly, "Daughter of Addison," The Catholic World, CXVIII, (November, 1938), 160.

Unconsciously, perhaps, but, nevertheless, effectively, she employed that dictum attributed to St. Augustine, which Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., has revitalized as a norm for Catholic writers:

in necessario, unitas;	dogmas of the Christian faith and the imperatives of Christian morality.
in dubio, libertas;	matters of literary taste and opinion.
in omnibus, caritas.	charity must be the soul that informs all.

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