The Birmingham Eccentric

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NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish stories of events which have news value and which are written by persons not connected with the editorial staff of the paper. All copy must be presented before noon on Wednesdays. The right is reserved, however, to make such superficial changes in the work submitted as are necessary to the style of the paper and as are required by laws of the state. Because of a mechanical situation in the composing room, headlines written by those other than members of the staff cannot be used. Any erroneous reflection upon the character, standing or reputation of any person, firm or corporation which may appear in the columns of The Eccentric will be gladly corrected upon being brought to the attention of the publisher.

Birmingham Has A New City Manager

Elevation of Donald C. Egbert, former local city assessor, to the position of City Manager, to succeed James W. Parry, is fitting reward for a man who for many years has served local government as a capable servant. Though quite a young man, he probably has absorbed sufficient experience while here to step into the place opened to him, and The Eccentric wishes him every success in his new responsibilities.

A new perspective and enthusiasm in this office should work to the advantage of all concerned. While Manager Egbert is, of course, under the direct control and supervision of the City Commission, this latter body undoubtedly wants him to approach his new duties with aggressive independence, and will expect him to provide them with current, practical plans for the best local government at the least sound cost.

Since the administration of good government is a practical business, we trust that Mr. Egbert will be unafraid, not too shy and modest, in presenting his ideas. He will find that the public admires openness and frankness in public office.

He will do well to remember, in the language of Grover Cleveland, that "a public office is a public trust"—and should be administered publicly.

Do the Public Schools Require Too Much Home-Work?

From time to time we hear, locally, criticism from both pupils and parents of the increasing amount of "home work" required by the Birmingham public school system. Not being a professional educator, we are not going to defend this premise, but we wonder, after reading the following comment in The Royal Oak Daily Tribune, if the problem isn't somewhat nation-wide. Do you agree with what follows?

"One of New York's city schools is doing away with home work. The class periods are lengthened and divided into two periods, the first part for instruction, the second part used to work out the next day's assignments. For several reasons this appears to be a good plan.

"First, the pupils does his work under supervision,—if he meets with a problem the instructor is at hand to help him through. He is also working out the next day's work while today's lesson is fresh in his mind.

"Second, hours at home, after school and in the evening, can be given uninterrupted to the study of arts, and enjoyment of wholesome family activities.

"Third, if a shorter working day is thought advisable for the adult why not for the young? Chronic fatigue is noxious. To build health for later life the young must not be overworked."

No Word From The Dead

Some weeks ago we called attention to the final effort which would be made by the widow of the famous magician, Harry Houdini, to get in touch with the spirit of her departed husband on the tenth anniversary of his death. Before Mr. Houdini died, he made an agreement with his wife that whoever went first would try to reach the other with a message from the outside world and a pre-arranged message, phrased in code, was adopted.

Mrs. Houdini recently arranged to stage the final seance, "hoping," but stated beforehand that although thousands of mediums and spiritualists pretended to have a message for her from her husband, no part of the pre-arranged message "had ever come through to me."

The last seance was not different in results from the others and no message came from the departed dead.

Not For Fun!

That the nations of the world are engaged in a race to rearm is seen from the estimate of the League of Nations that expenditures for armament in 1935 amounted to $9,295,000,000. This compares with $8,281,000,00 in 1934 and $7,436,000,000 in 1933.

There may be simple-minded citizens who think that the nations are spending this money for fun and that they have no idea of fighting. One can assume, if one wishes to, that Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin are enlarging their armies because everybody else is doing the same thing. In fact, if one persists, it is possible to believe that the Japanese want equality of naval tonnage in order to keep peace among the Chinese.

YOUR MODERN PRISON SYSTEM is about as valuable a corrective to those who have criminal tendencies as a surgeon-less hospital would be to those who need treatment for some physical difficulty. Ask Dan McGaffey, Probate Judge for Oakland County, or any of the three Circuit Judges, what they think about contemporary sentencing of evil-doers, especially the first offenders; they'll tell you that the modern prison is the worst possible breeding ground for more criminals—yet few people interest themselves in bringing about needed reforms in this direction.

Fred W. Green Was A Friendly Personality

Fred W. Green's death in the Upper Peninsula, where he was enjoying his annual deer hunting season, removes from Michigan a colorful politician, one whose greatest claim to success as a two-term Governor of this State lay in his tremendous ability to make friends. During his stay in Lansing he initiated considerable good government, and for that his public has been grateful. We, too, join in commending his record in certain directions.

But his greatest strength was also, in part, the cause of his greatest political weakness, for there swooped down upon State government, during his occupancy of the Chief Executive's office, more job-seekers and predatory interests than were good for Michigan Republicanism; while cherishing a personal friendship for the late Governor, we cannot overlook the fact that his years in Lansing marked the beginning of a decline in Republicanism among the voters of the Wolverine State.

Ionia's late leading citizen made many sacrifices for Michigan, some of them costing him plenty of money, as he labored in Lansing, turning over the direction of his manufacturing establishment in Ionia to others.

Fred W. Green loved people—ordinary people, and he leaves thousands of them to mourn his loss. He passed away in the far north, while engaged in his favorite pursuit of the great out-of-doors.

No longer will he be bothered by the disagreeable business of catering to the wire-pulling of the political mob. May his rest be sweet, and his genial friendliness ever green in the land of the living.

She Wrote About the Loveliness of Home Life

Her birthday was last week, November 29. Whose? Why the little woman all America delights to honor, Louisa May Alcott. Although she died before those who are beginning life at 40 were born, (1888), still her memory lingers on.

Why? Because she was a literary genius? No. Because she went to war and served on a hospital staff? No.

Why then? Because, although her construction was faulty, she built up homey stories about you and about me. In "Little Women" and "Little Men" she showed us living life together naturally. Quarreling a bit—but making up and being kind and generous and thoughtful. She gently pointed to our faults, but made us feel good by showing how we try to out-grow them, reaching for the ideal.

Emerson's friend, Amos Bronson Alcott, an educator and lecturer of no mean ability, was her father.

He brought her up with her sisters to be useful about the house in Concord, Mass., where they lived most of her life, having moved there from Germantown, Pennsylvania, when she was two.

America has never seen a more popular book for children than "Little Women." 60,000 were sold the first year and 100,000 a year for many years after. No one knows how many have read it since it was produced as a moving picture. Some of her sister's children still receive royalties from it.

She was like many other writers in this: She wanted to be entirely alone and undisturbed while the mood was on. So it was that she had a garret room, where, surrounded by books, she would work away alone until a certain goal was reached.

She loved her father dearly and never was happier than when serving or helping him. One day he died. Two days later she followed after.

Their garments of flesh were laid aside in the family plot near those of Emerson, Hawthorne and Thoreau.

INCREASING THE PAY of Birmingham's employees an average of seven percent, as was done last week by the Commission, is not too much of the original 34 percent pay-cut since 1929; if there were fewer employees the available funds would give each remaining one even more. One of the best things the new City Manager can do is to cut out a few office partitions in the City Hall and merge some of the departments for the sake of greater efficiency and economy.

Practical Paragraphs

By John Edwin Price

GET STARTED! ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Training the mind to observe much and minutely also sharpens the faculties so that opportunities for advancement are more easily seen.

Keen minded as you are you may see no immediate opening. Have you a hobby? James E. West recently advised the readers of Boy's Life to have a hobby, something related to their chosen life work or entirely apart from it. It lends variety and may lead to something surprisingly worthwhile.

We read recently of an architect who had a hobby of reading medical books. He is now a successful surgeon.

On the other hand a registered pharmacist took to reading philosophy. At first he read condensations of the writings of the great philosophers. Then he read what different historians said briefly about each. He then started to reading full works. Today thousands of people take his mail courses in the technique of successful living.

Lincoln said, "I will prepare myself and my chance will come." There is much in it.

The artists we hear through the radio did much hum-drum practicing without pay. It seemed futile at the time but it started them "on the way."

If you would be going up you must do something definite to get your ideal out of the indefinite and intangible dream states.

A young printer of our acquaintance got tired of working for someone else at a few cents an hour. He wanted to be in business for himself. An advertisement of a course in sign painting appealed to him. Months of practicing curves and ogees at home became monotonous. Then one day he decided he'd feel better if what progress he had made could evidence itself in cash returns. He made up some card business slogans for restaurants, pressing shops, shoe shining parlors, etc. The cash intake, while not large, gave definiteness to his new direction, fired him with new ambition.

He eventually realized like a boy learning to roller skate that he could trust himself on his new means of conveyance forward. He used to propel himself through College—which he never could have done on his printing trade due to hours of work. He bought himself a second hand motor cycle and between class periods ran out to nearby towns in search of work. He eventually became the pastor of an influential church in a city of half a million people.

When you start to bring your mental pictures out in life proportions you can never tell into what they may develop as you follow one suggested natural process after another.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

WASHINGTON LETTER

Long Range Relief Program Cited as Vital to Country's Prosperity

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON.—The U. S. Supreme Court's split decision which upheld New York's state unemployment insurance law encouraged relief officials to think the court may be more kindly disposed to long range relief measures.

The federal Social Security program is the cornerstone of forward-looking plans for relief of the unemployed which the president has been urged to consider.

WPA money will be exhausted early next year, so it will be necessary for Congress, soon after it convenes, to act to maintain the works projects program with a new appropriation. Roosevelt has been told that some $750,000,000 will be needed to round out the works program for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1937.

Estimates running up to $2,500,000,000 have been handed to the president for the next fiscal year. Budget estimates are likely to be well below these figures.

The deficiency appropriation bill passed by the last Congress provided $1,425,000,000 to cover the cost of relief in 1936-37, but that amount was to be combined with unexpended balances and anticipated deficiency appropriations.

Altogether, this fiscal year's relief bill will be around $3,000,000,000. Roosevelt hopes he can cut that figure down by a billion.

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NEW DEALERS close to the president have recommended several plans based on the idea that unemployment and unemployment relief are constant problems in our economic system. WPA Administrator Harry Hopkins has urged the president to push legislation for shorter hours, minimum wages, the end of child labor, and an unemployment census, for a lower minimum age limit on old age pensions and insurance, and for a permanent WPA to employ workers not covered by unemployment insurance when they are without jobs.

Another of Hopkins' theories is said to be that if boys and girls under 18 years of age were kept in school and not allowed to work, between two and 3,000,000 youths would be dropped from industrial payrolls. Also, he has estimated that 3,000,000 persons over 65 years of age now are employed.

Hopkins makes the point that although the relief burden is decreasing, half the unemployed have never received any help, so it is to be expected that employment may increase without any proportionate change in size of relief rolls.

At one period there were about 16,000,000 unemployed, it is said, and a peak of 6,500,000 relief cases. Placing today's unemployment figures at the low estimate of 8,000,000 and estimating that 4,000,000 of these are receiving aid, the relief problem for the winter ahead is still a huge one.

• • •

STATISTICS for industrial production show it is only about 10 per cent below 1929 figures, but WPA officials say that after the 1929 production level is reached, between six and 7,000,000 persons still will be out of work.

Until there is a census which will provide such information, it will not be possibe to know how many of these unemployed are younger than 18, older than 65, heads of families or single, or unemployable.

With realization that such a large number of people are in need and have received no help from local or federal sources, the information a census would give becomes tremendously important.

Administration officials will require such information in working out a long-time relief program.

RANDOM REMARKS

George Bernard Shaw, British Playwright:

"I was not offered the Order of Merit because the Government knew I had already conferred it on myself."

Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister:

"Friendship cannot be exclusive; it cannot be directed against anyone else."

J. Edgar Hoover, director, Federal Bureau of Investigation:

"Crime detection is becoming more and more a matter of brain over brawn."

Carl David Anderson, winner, Nobel Award in Physics:

"In my younger school days, my ambition was to become a track star—a high jumper."

James Shelby Thomas, president, Clarkson College of Technology:

"The machine has in every respect been a fairy godmother to the toiler."

Leonard P. Ayers, financier and writer:

"The people now look to the Government as being able to solve their problems and they intend to insist that it shall solve them."

Charles H. Vontagen, secretary, Pennsylvania Grocers:

"A housewife won't walk out of an up-to-date kitchen and buy groceries in a pine board store room."

Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture:

"I find that aroused farmers are worth more than all the brain-trusters in getting something done."

J. Duncan Spaeth, president, University of Kansas City:

"I sometimes believe incorrect spelling is a sign of intelligence."

William Green, president, A. F. of L.:

"Funds for social security should not come from wage earners' envelopes, directly or indirectly, but from a general tax on the wealth they help to create."

Francis E. Townsend, pension plan advocate:

"I am not very happy about the election results. I thought it would be closer."

Charles F. Kettering, industrial engineer:

"Some failures are thresholds to success—be careful about throwing them away."

The Other Chap Says-

BACK TO THE INDIANS

How long would it take for a state such as Michigan to revert to the wild state in which it was found by the French explorers? Not very long. A herd of deer roam several sections of Bingham county today. The big buck captured last week in Bunkerhill township was such a fine specimen that he was taken north to help restock Ogemaw herds.

If not a furrow were turned in Ingham county in 10 years nature would almost have the county for her own. Have you seen the vacant subdivisions around Detroit? If you have then you have noticed that the sidewalks and roads built 10 years ago have been broken up by the elements and that bushes and even small trees are growing through the broken concrete and the gravel.

Wilderness prevails in New England where a generation ago there were farms. Roosevelt and other countries only 150 miles north have been reclaimed by nature.

A great civilization once existed in what is now Mexico and Central and South America. Big cities flourished and probably their residents believed that their civilization would always stand. Yet it fell and for centuries the palaces and the pyramids lay hidden beneath the jungle.

As the age of the world is computed this nation and all European nations have not made a dent in time. Michigan has been a state for 100 years. If geologists are to be believed, this part of the earth has been supporting life of various kinds for 500,000 times the 100-year span of Michigan.

We count our history in Michigan by referring to the administration of various governors. We mark events by Sleeper, by Osborn, by Warner, by Pingree, by Green, by Comstock and by Fitzgerald. A thousand years from now some scientist may be poking around to find some token of the present era.

Civilization is not permanent. It is a continual battle and when civilization fails to press forward it is shoved back rapidly.

We don't mean that because a deer was captured last week in Bunkerhill township that Ingham will soon become one with Ninevah and Tyre. We do mean that nature is continually reclaiming her own and that few things, civilization included, are permanent.—Vernon J. Brown in The Ingham County News.

THE BEST SELLING BOOK

Every year a number of books are written which become best sellers; but there is still one book which year after year ranks in a leading place as the best seller—The Bible.

If you haven't already read about or purchased a copy, we believe you will be much interested in the new edition of "The Bible" which has been designed to be read as living literature. The Old and New Testaments are faithful to the King James Version, but are presented in new form. Prose is printed as prose and poetry as verse, dramas as drama, letters as letters; and the books have been arranged according to time and subject matter. The new edition is one for reading and enjoyment, for theological or science purposes, as the whole arrangement is designed to make this greatest book enjoyable reading for everyone.

Charles Dickens once wrote to his son, "I put a New Testament among your books—because it is the best book that ever was or ever will be in the world, and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful can possibly be guided."—Ionia County News.

'My Country, 'Tis of Thee'...

By T. H. MILLINGTON

Labor Convention and Politics

It seems to this writer that the National Convention of the American Federation of Labor did a wise thing when it outlawed John L. Lewis' scheme for creating a political party out of its labor organizations.

T. H. MILLINGTON

Under the American form of government, the political and economic rights which in our Constitution are reserved to the people are not based on whether a person is a plumber, a barber, a dressmaker, a teacher, a preacher, a clerk, an insurance agent or a real estate dealer. Those reservations are based solely on the condition of being an American citizen. To be required by one's occupation to be a member of a specific political party is repugnant to American ideals of freedom and independence, and, in the opinion of this writer, the American Federation and its president Mr. Wm. Green are to be congratulated on their vote to exclude the Lewis idea of regimentation of labor organizations into one political party.

The Convention's resolution for congressional action to broaden the Social Security Act is also commendable. Here are the points:

(a) More wage earners to be included in the Social Art.

(b) A higher rate of compensation.

(c) A guaranty of earnings.

The funds paid into the government so that when the time comes the money paid in will not have been used for something else.

Points (a) and (b) are both fair in equity and integrity. But how to afford the expense of these is a problem.

More Wage Earners

Under demand (a) are involved, according to the United States News, a gigantic number of wage earners amounting to 21 million men and women not now included under the Social Security Act, although the Act at present is estimated to include 26 millions. That is to say, that when to those now included in the Social Security Act are added the 21 millions the A. F. of L. wants included, there will be **a total of 47 million included under the Social Security Act**, out of **our present 126 million total population**—or nearly one third of our people. In other words: **Of every three people, a little less than two shall pay for the social security of a little more than one.** This is, to say the least, highly ambitious, highly idealistic, but highly **insecure.**

Insecure, because the assumption that the **two** are able to pay for the **one** is so problematical that any legislation based on that assumption will be equally problematical. I say this entirely apart from the proposition as to whether there is **a possibility of social security by legislation.**

Yet the Federation is right in taking the stand that it is not fair to legislate to benefit the 26 million and exclude the remaining 21 millions.

Who are these 21,000,000?

They are, according to the UNITED STATES NEWS, Nov. 23, the following:

Seamen, casual workers	1,000,000
State and local government employees	1,000,000
Domestic and personal employees	2,500,000
Self employed & professional workers	5,500,000
Agricultural workers	11,000,000

So—say that these are less entitled to social security than those now included is hardly being fair to them; but **to pay the cost** is the problem ignored by the idealist yet which is involved under point (b). In other words, more generous social security is desirable for the **one**, provided the **two** can afford to pay for it.

Future Guaranties

As to point (c), which the Federation has resolved to bring to the attention of Congress, this really means that the present Congress will be asked to **establish a** guaranty that Congress 40 to 50 years hence and forever thereafter will do as this Congress may declare shall be done. This seems so impossible under either or any other form of government that even God Almighty would not want to assume that responsibility.

The Record

Most of the members of the incoming Congress were members of the last Congress, which invalidated the Gold Clause in bonds, both Government and private, in the gold certificates held in the Treasury notes of 1890, nullifying the acts of previous Congresses. And, though that Constitution states in Article I of the Amendments: "Congress shall make no law prohibiting to petition the Government for redress of grievances," the last Congress, nevertheless, passed a law prohibiting suits for damage against the Government under the Gold Clause in its bonds.

With such a record,—and I am not here discussing the merit or demerit of the so-called Gold Act,—it would seem inconsistent for the next Congress to attempt, even if it were possible, to bind future Congresses.

Anyhow, why be so concerned about pensions in the future? Are there no old people now who need pensions? If payroll taxes begin now, why not let the benefits begin at the same time? Why ask labor to pay the national debt first before they can hope to get any benefit?

If our educational institutions are as efficient as they are cracked up to be, the succeeding generations should be a lot smarter than we are, and they should be far more able to care for their own unemployed and aged than we are.

What this generation ought to do is to **pay as it goes.**

WHAT IS POETRY

More than a hog,
Eavesnously consuming slop and swill
And wallowing in muck and filth at will—
All beauty veiled as by some mist or fog.
I have read poetry about a war,
Dismembered bodies lying here and there
Gore, blood and lust, homes desolate and bare,
Hearts racked and torn; the poetry of sore
Embitered more delightful things than these,
Music and heartthrobs, heroes, valentines,
Rivers and hills and grass and flowers and trees,
Such as this ran along its metered lines.
No theme seems quite like poetry to me
Except it breathes of grace and symmetry.

—Beatrice McDonald

Jots 'n Jest

TRAFFIC statistics show that most accidents occur on straight sections of road and not on curves, an argument against following the straight and narrow.

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Elephant became drunk from whisky given him to stop pain. That might be probably saw pink men.

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University of California reports that women write more easily than men, but usually not as interestingly. Still, their diaries aren't bad.

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The average man has a vocabulary of 7000 to 10,000 words; those used most of he is married being probably "yes" and "dear."

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An Ohioan had the same umbrella for 23 years. Probably was keeping it for a rainy day.

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