

## Chapter Eight

### THE BALLYHOO YEARS

ALL nations, in all eras of history, are swept from time to time by waves of contagious excitement over fads or fashions or dramatic public issues. But the size and frequency of these waves is highly variable, as is the nature of the events which set them in motion. One of the striking characteristics of the era of Coolidge Prosperity was the unparalleled rapidity and unanimity with which millions of men and women turned their attention, their talk, and their emotional interest upon a series of tremendous trifles—a heavyweight boxing-match, a murder trial, a new automobile model, a transatlantic flight.

Most of the *causes célèbres* which thus stirred the country from end to end were quite unimportant from the traditional point of view of the historian. The future destinies of few people were affected in the slightest by the testimony of the "pig woman" at the Hall-Mills trial or the attempt to rescue Floyd Collins from his Kentucky cave. Yet the fact that such things could engage the hopes and fears of unprecedented numbers of people was anything but unimportant. No account of the Coolidge years would be adequate which did not review that strange procession of events which a nation tired of "important issues" swarmed to watch, or which did not take account of that remarkable chain of circumstances which produced as the hero of the age, not a great public servant, not a reformer, not a warrior, but a stunt flyer who crossed the ocean to win a money prize.

By the time Calvin Coolidge reached the White House,

the tension of the earlier years of the Post-war Decade had been largely relaxed. Though Woodrow Wilson still clung feebly to life in the sunny house in S Street, the League issue was dead and only handfuls of irreconcilable idealists imagined it to have a chance of resuscitation. The radicals were discouraged, the labor movement had lost energy and prestige since the days of the Big Red Scare, and under the beneficent influence of easy riches—or at least of easy Fords and Chevrolets—individualistic capitalism had settled itself securely in the saddle. The Ku-Klux Klan numbered its millions, yet already it was beginning to lose that naïve ardor which had lighted its fires on a thousand hilltops; it was becoming less of a crusade and more of a political racket. Genuine public issues, about which the masses of the population could be induced to feel intensely, were few and far between. There was prohibition, to be sure; anybody could get excited about prohibition; but because the division of opinion on liquor cut across party lines, every national politician, almost without exception, did his best to thrust this issue into the background. In the agricultural Northwest and Middle West there was a violent outcry for farm relief, but it could command only a scattered and half-hearted interest throughout the rest of a nation which was becoming progressively urbanized. Public spirit was at low ebb; over the World Court, the oil scandals, the Nicaraguan situation, the American people as a whole refused to bother themselves. They gave their energies to triumphant business, and for the rest they were in holiday mood. "Happy," they might have said, "is the nation which has no history—and a lot of good shows to watch." They were ready for any good show that came along.

It was now possible in the United States for more people to enjoy the same good show at the same time than in any other land on earth or at any previous time in history. Mass production was not confined to automobiles; there was mass

production in news and ideas as well. For the system of easy nation-wide communication which had long since made the literate and prosperous American people a nation of faddists was rapidly becoming more widely extended, more centralized, and more effective than ever before.

To begin with, there were fewer newspapers, with larger circulations, and they were standardized to an unprecedented degree by the increasing use of press-association material and syndicated features. Between 1914 and 1926, as Silas Bent has pointed out, the number of daily papers in the country dropped from 2,580 to 2,001, the number of Sunday papers dropped from 571 to 541, and the aggregate circulation per issue rose from somewhat over 28,000,000 to 36,000,000. The city of Cleveland, which a quarter of a century before had had three morning papers, now had but one; Detroit, Minneapolis, and St. Louis had lost all but one apiece; Chicago during a period in which it had doubled in population, had seen the number of its morning dailies drop from seven to two. Newspapers all over the country were being gathered into chains under more or less centralized direction: by 1927 the success of the Hearst and Scripps-Howard systems and the hope of cutting down overhead costs had led to the formation of no less than 55 chains controlling 230 daily papers with a combined circulation of over 13,000,000.

No longer did the local editor rely as before upon local writers and cartoonists to fill out his pages and give them a local flavor; the central office of the chain, or newspaper syndicates in New York, could provide him with editorials, health talks, comic strips, sob-sister columns, household hints, sports gossip, and Sunday features prepared for a national audience and guaranteed to tickle the mass mind. Andy Gump and Dorothy Dix had their millions of admirers from Maine to Oregon, and the words hammered out by a reporter at Jack Dempsey's training-camp were devoured

with one accord by real-estate men in Florida and riveters in Seattle.

Meanwhile, the number of national magazines with huge circulations had increased, the volume of national advertising had increased, a horde of publicity agents had learned the knack of associating their cause or product with whatever happened to be in the public mind at the moment, and finally there was the new and vastly important phenomenon of radio broadcasting, which on occasion could link together a multitude of firesides to hear the story of a World's Series game or a Lindbergh welcome. The national mind had become as never before an instrument upon which a few men could play. And these men were learning, as Mr. Bent has also shown, to play upon it in a new way—to concentrate upon *one tune at a time*.

Not that they put their heads together and deliberately decided to do this. Circumstances and self-interest made it the almost inevitable thing for them to do. They discovered—the successful tabloids were daily teaching them—that the public tended to become excited about one thing at a time. Newspaper owners and editors found that whenever a Dayton trial or a *Vestris* disaster took place, they sold more papers if they gave it all they had—their star reporters, their front-page display, and the bulk of their space. They took full advantage of this discovery: according to Mr. Bent's compilations, the insignificant Gray-Snyder murder trial got a bigger "play" in the press than the sinking of the *Titanic*; Lindbergh's flight, than the Armistice and the overthrow of the German Empire. Syndicate managers and writers, advertisers, press agents, radio broadcasters, all were aware that mention of the leading event of the day, whatever it might be, was the key to public interest. The result was that when something happened which promised to appeal to the popular mind, one had it hurled at one in huge headlines, waded through page after page of syndicated discus-

sion of it, heard about it on the radio, was reminded of it again and again in the outpourings of publicity-seeking orators and preachers, saw pictures of it in the Sunday papers and in the movies, and (unless one was a perverse individualist) enjoyed the sensation of vibrating to the same chord which thrilled a vast populace.

The country had bread, but it wanted circuses—and now it could go to them a hundred million strong.

## § 2

Mah Jong was still popular during the winter of 1923-24—the winter when Calvin Coolidge was becoming accustomed to the White House, and the Bok Peace Prize was awarded, and the oil scandals broke, and Woodrow Wilson died, and General Dawes went overseas to preside over the reparations conference, and *So Big* outsold all other novels, and people were tiring of “Yes, We Have No Bananas,” and to the delight of every rotogravure editor the lid of the stone sarcophagus of King Tut-Ankh Amen’s tomb was raised at Luxor. Mah Jong was popular, but it had lost its novelty.

It was during that winter—on January 2, 1924, to be precise—that a young man in New York called on his aunt. The aunt had a relative who was addicted to the cross-word puzzles which appeared every Sunday in the magazine supplement of the *New York World*, and asked the young man whether there was by any chance a book of these puzzles; it might make a nice present for her relative. The young man, on due inquiry, found that there was no such thing as a book of them, although cross-word puzzles dated back at least to 1913 and had been published in the *World* for years. But as it happened, he himself (his name was Richard Simon) was at that very moment launching a book-publishing business with his friend Schuster—and with one girl as their entire staff. Simon had a bright idea, which he com-

municated to Schuster the next day: *they* would bring out a cross-word-puzzle book. The two young men asked Prosper Buranelli, F. Gregory Hartswick, and Margaret Petherbridge, the puzzle editors of the *World*, to prepare it; and despite a certain coolness on the part of the book-sellers, who told them that the public "wasn't interested in puzzle books," they brought it out in mid-April.

Their promotion campaign was ingenious and proved to be prophetic, for from the very beginning they advertised their book by drawing the following parallel:

1921—Coué

1922—Mah Jong

1923—Bananas

1924—THE CROSS-WORD-PUZZLE BOOK

Within a month this odd-looking volume with a pencil attached to it had become a best seller. By the following winter its sales had mounted into the hundreds of thousands, other publishers were falling over themselves to get out books which would reap an advantage from the craze, it was a dull newspaper which did not have its daily puzzle, sales of dictionaries were bounding, there was a new demand for that ancient and honorable handmaid of the professional writer, Roget's *Thesaurus*, a man had been sent to jail in New York for refusing to leave a restaurant after four hours of trying to solve a puzzle, and Mrs. Mary Zaba of Chicago was reported to be a "cross-word widow," her husband apparently being so busy with puzzles that he had no time to support her. The newspapers carried the news that a Pittsburgh pastor had put the text of his sermon into a puzzle. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad placed dictionaries in all the trains on its main line. A traveler between New York and Boston reported that 60 per cent of the passengers were trying to fill up the squares in their puzzles, and that in the dining-car five waiters were trying to think

of a five-letter word which meant "serving to inspire fear." Anybody you met on the street could tell you the name of the Egyptian sun-god or provide you with the two-letter word which meant a printer's measure.

The cross-word puzzle craze gradually died down in 1925. It was followed by a minor epidemic of question-and-answer books; there was a time when ladies and gentlemen with vague memories faced frequent humiliation after dinner because they were unable to identify John Huss or tell what an ohm was. Not until after contract bridge was introduced in the United States in 1926 did they breathe easily. Despite the decline of the cross-word puzzle, however, it remained throughout the rest of the decade a daily feature in most newspapers; and Simon and Schuster, bringing out their sixteenth series in 1930, figured their total sales since early 1924 at nearly three-quarters of a million copies, and the grand total, including British and Canadian sales, at over two millions.

### § 3

This craze, like the Mah Jong craze which preceded it, was a fresh indication of the susceptibility of the American people to fads, but it was not in any real sense a creature of the new ballyhoo newspaper technic. The newspapers did not pick it up until it was well on its way. The greatest demonstrations of the power of the press to excite the millions over trifles were yet to come.

There was, of course, plenty to interest the casual newspaper reader in 1924 and early 1925, when everybody was doing puzzles. There was the presidential campaign, though this proved somewhat of an anti-climax after the sizzling Democratic Convention at Madison Square Garden, that long-drawn-out battle between the forces of William G. McAdoo and Al Smith which ended in a half-hearted stam-

pede to John W. Davis; so much emotional energy had been expended by the Westerners in hating the Tammany Catholic and by the Tammanyites in singing "The Sidewalks of New York," that the Democratic party never really collected itself, and the unimpassioned Calvin, with his quiet insistence upon economy and tax reduction and his knack for making himself appear the personal embodiment of prosperity, was carried into office by a vast majority. There was also the trial of Leopold and Loeb for the murder of Bobby Franks in Chicago. There was the visit of the Prince of Wales to Long Island, during which he danced much, played polo, went motor-boating, and was detected in the act of reading *The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*. (It was in 1924, by the way, that those other importations from Britain, the voluminous gray flannel trousers known as Oxford bags, first hung about the heels of the up-and-coming young male.) There was a noteworthy alliance between a representative of the nobility of France and a representative of the nobility of Hollywood: Gloria Swanson married the Marquis de la Falaise de la Coudray. There was a superb eclipse of the sun, providentially arranged for the delectation of the Eastern seaboard cities. There was Paavo Nurmi: watch in hand, his heels thudding on the board track, Nurmi outran the chesty taxi-driver, Joie Ray, and later performed the incredible feat of covering two miles in less than nine minutes. There was the hullabaloo over bringing the serum to Nome to end a diphtheria epidemic, which for a few days made national heroes of Leonard Seppalla, Gunnar Kasson, and the dog Balto. And there was Floyd Collins imprisoned in his cave.

It was the tragedy of Floyd Collins, perhaps, which gave the clearest indication up to that time of the unanimity with which the American people could become excited over a quite unimportant event if only it were dramatic enough.

Floyd Collins was an obscure young Kentuckian who



had been exploring an underground passage five miles from Mammoth Cave, with no more heroic purpose than that of finding something which might attract lucrative tourists. Some 125 feet from daylight he was caught by a cave-in which pinned his foot under a huge rock. So narrow and steep was the passage that those who tried to dig him out had to hitch along on their stomachs in cold slime and water and pass back from hand to hand the earth and rocks that they pried loose with hammers and blow-torches. Only a few people might have heard of Collins's predicament if W. B. Miller of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* had not been slight of stature, daring, and an able reporter. Miller wormed his way down the slippery, tortuous passageway to interview Collins, became engrossed in the efforts to rescue the man, described them in vivid dispatches—and to his amazement found that the entire country was turning to watch the struggle. Collins's plight contained those elements of dramatic suspense and individual conflict with fate which make a great news story, and every city editor, day after day, planted it on page one. When Miller arrived at Sand Cave he had found only three men at the entrance, warming themselves at a fire and wondering, without excitement, how soon their friend would extricate himself. A fortnight later there was a city of a hundred or more tents there and the milling crowds had to be restrained by barbed-wire barriers and State troops with drawn bayonets; and on February 17, 1925, even the *New York Times* gave a three-column page-one headline to the news of the dénouement:

FIND FLOYD COLLINS DEAD IN CAVE  
TRAP ON 18TH DAY; LIFELESS AT LEAST  
24 HOURS; FOOT MUST BE AMPUTATED  
TO GET BODY OUT

Within a month, as Charles Merz later reminded the readers of the *New Republic*, there was a cave-in in a North Caro-

lina mine in which 71 men were caught and 53 actually lost. It attracted no great notice. It was "just a mine disaster." Yet for more than two weeks the plight of a single commonplace prospector for tourists riveted the attention of the nation on Sand Cave, Kentucky. It was an exciting show to watch, and the dispensers of news were learning to turn their spotlights upon one show at a time.

Even the Collins thriller, however, was as nothing beside the spectacle which was offered a few months later when John Thomas Scopes was tried at Dayton, Tennessee, for teaching the doctrine of evolution in the Central High School.

The Scopes case had genuine significance. It dramatized one of the most momentous struggles of the age—the conflict between religion and science. Yet even this trial, so diligently and noisily was it ballyhooed, took on some of the aspects of a circus.

#### § 4

If religion lost ground during the Post-war Decade, the best available church statistics gave no sign of the fact. They showed, to be sure, a very slow growth in the number of churches in use; but this was explained partly by the tendency toward consolidation of existing churches and partly by the trend of population toward the cities—a trend which drew the church-going public into fewer churches with larger congregations. The number of church *members*, on the other hand, grew just about as fast as the population, and church wealth and expenditures grew more rapidly still. On actual attendance at services there were no reliable figures, although it was widely believed that an increasing proportion of the nominally faithful were finding other things to do on Sunday morning. Statistically, the churches

apparently just about maintained their position in American life.

Yet it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they maintained it chiefly by the force of momentum—and to some extent, perhaps, by diligent attention to the things which are Cæsar's: by adopting, here and there, the acceptable gospel according to Bruce Barton; by strenuous membership and money-raising campaigns (such as Bishop Manning's high-pressure drive in New York for a "house of prayer for all people," which proved to be a house of prayer under strictly Episcopal auspices); and by the somewhat secular lure of church theatricals, open forums, basket-ball and swimming pools, and muscular good fellowship for the young. Something spiritual had gone out of the churches—a sense of certainty that theirs was the way to salvation. Religion was furiously discussed; there had never been so many books on religious topics in circulation, and the leading divines wrote constantly for the popular magazines; yet all this discussion was itself a sign that for millions of people religion had become a debatable subject instead of being accepted without question among the traditions of the community.

If church attendance declined, it was perhaps because, as Walter Lippmann put it, people were not so certain that they were going to meet God when they went to church. If the minister's prestige declined, it was in many cases because he had lost his one-time conviction that he had a definite and authoritative mission. The Reverend Charles Stelzle, a shrewd observer of religious conditions, spoke bluntly in an article in the *World's Work*: the church, he said, was declining largely because "those who are identified with it do not actually believe in it." Mr. Stelzle told of asking groups of Protestant ministers what there was in their church programs which would prompt them, if they were outsiders, to say, "That is great; that is worth lining up for," and of receiving in no case an immediate answer which satisfied even

the answerer himself. In the congregations, and especially among the younger men and women, there was an undeniable weakening of loyalty to the church and an undeniable vagueness as to what it had to offer them—witness, for example, the tone of the discussions which accompanied the abandonment of compulsory chapel in a number of colleges.

This loss of spiritual dynamic was variously ascribed to the general let-down in moral energy which followed the strain of the war; to prosperity, which encouraged the comfortable belief that it profited a man very considerably if he gained a Cadillac car and a laudatory article in the *American Magazine*; to the growing popularity of Sunday golf and automobiling; and to disapproval in some quarters of the political lobbying of church organizations, and disgust at the connivance of many ministers in the bigotry of the Klan. More important than any of these causes, however, was the effect upon the churches of scientific doctrines and scientific methods of thought.

The prestige of science was colossal. The man in the street and the woman in the kitchen, confronted on every hand with new machines and devices which they owed to the laboratory, were ready to believe that science could accomplish almost anything; and they were being deluged with scientific information and theory. The newspapers were giving columns of space to inform (or misinform) them of the latest discoveries: a new dictum from Albert Einstein was now front-page stuff even though practically nobody could understand it. Outlines of knowledge poured from the presses to tell people about the planetesimal hypothesis and the constitution of the atom, to describe for them in unwarranted detail the daily life of the cave-man, and to acquaint them with electrons, endocrines, hormones, vitamins, reflexes, and psychoses. On the lower intellectual levels, millions of people were discovering for the first time

that there was such a thing as the venerable theory of evolution. Those who had assimilated this doctrine without disaster at an early age were absorbing from Wells, Thomson, East, Wiggam, Dorsey, and innumerable other popularizers and interpreters of science a collection of ideas newer and more disquieting: that we are residents of an insignificant satellite of a very average star obscurely placed in one of who-knows-how-many galaxies scattered through space; that our behavior depends largely upon chromosomes and ductless glands; that the Hottentot obeys impulses similar to those which activate the pastor of the First Baptist Church, and is probably already better adapted to his Hottentot environment than he would be if he followed the Baptist code; that sex is the most important thing in life, that inhibitions are not to be tolerated, that sin is an out-of-date term, that most untoward behavior is the result of complexes acquired at an early age, and that men and women are mere bundles of behavior-patterns, anyhow. If some of the scientific and pseudo-scientific principles which lodged themselves in the popular mind contradicted one another, that did not seem to matter: the popular mind appeared equally ready to believe with East and Wiggam in the power of heredity and with Watson in the power of environment.

Of all the sciences it was the youngest and least scientific which most captivated the general public and had the most disintegrating effect upon religious faith. Psychology was king. Freud, Adler, Jung, and Watson had their tens of thousands of votaries; intelligence-testers invaded the schools in quest of I. Q.s; psychiatrists were installed in business houses to hire and fire employees and determine advertising policies; and one had only to read the newspapers to be told with complete assurance that psychology held the key to the problems of waywardness, divorce, and crime.

The word science had become a shibboleth. To preface a statement with "Science teaches us" was enough to silence argument. If a sales manager wanted to put over a promotion scheme or a clergyman to recommend a charity, they both hastened to say that it was scientific.

The effect of the prestige of science upon churchmen was well summed up by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick at the end of the decade:

"The men of faith might claim for their positions ancient tradition, practical usefulness, and spiritual desirability, but one query could prick all such bubbles: Is it scientific? That question has searched religion for contraband goods, stripped it of old superstitions, forced it to change its categories of thought and methods of work, and in general has so cowed and scared religion that many modern-minded believers . . . instinctively throw up their hands at the mere whisper of it. . . . When a prominent scientist comes out strongly for religion, all the churches thank Heaven and take courage as though it were the highest possible compliment to God to have Eddington believe in Him. Science has become the arbiter of this generation's thought, until to call even a prophet and a seer scientific is to cap the climax of praise."

So powerful was the invasion of scientific ideas and of the scientific habit of reliance upon proved facts that the Protestant churches—which numbered in their membership five out of every eight adult church members in the United States—were broken into two warring camps. Those who believed in the letter of the Bible and refused to accept any teaching, even of science, which seemed to conflict with it, began in 1921 to call themselves Fundamentalists. The Modernists (or Liberals), on the other hand, tried to reconcile their beliefs with scientific thought; to throw overboard what was out of date, to retain what was essential and intel-

lectually respectable, and generally to mediate between Christianity and the skeptical spirit of the age.

The position of the Fundamentalists seemed almost hopeless. The tide of all rational thought in a rational age seemed to be running against them. But they were numerous, and at least there was no doubt about where they stood. Particularly in the South they controlled the big Protestant denominations. And they fought strenuously. They forced the liberal Doctor Fosdick out of the pulpit of a Presbyterian church and back into his own Baptist fold, and even caused him to be tried for heresy (though there was no churchman in America more influential than he). They introduced into the legislatures of nearly half the states of the Union bills designed to forbid the teaching of the doctrine of evolution; in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and South Carolina they pushed such bills through one house of the legislature only to fail in the other; and in Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Mississippi they actually succeeded in writing their anachronistic wishes into law.

The Modernists had the *Zeitgeist* on their side, but they were not united. Their interpretations of God—as the first cause, as absolute energy, as idealized reality, as a righteous will working in creation, as the ideal and goal toward which all that is highest and best is moving—were confusingly various and ambiguous. Some of these interpretations offered little to satisfy the worshiper: one New England clergyman said that when he thought of God he thought of “a sort of oblong blur.” And the Modernists threw overboard so many doctrines in which the bulk of American Protestants had grown up believing (such as the Virgin birth, the resurrection of the body, and the Atonement) that they seemed to many to have no religious cargo left except a nebulous faith, a general benevolence, and a disposition to assure everyone that he was really just as religious as they. Gone for them, as Walter Lippmann said, was “that deep, com-

pulsive, organic faith in an external fact which is the essence of religion for all but that very small minority who can live within themselves in mystical communion or by the power of their understanding." The Modernists, furthermore, had not only Fundamentalism to battle with, but another adversary, the skeptic nourished on outlines of science; and the sermons of more than one Modernist leader gave the impression that Modernism, trying to meet the skeptic's arguments without resorting to the argument from authority, was being forced against its will to whittle down its creed to almost nothing at all.

All through the decade the three-sided conflict reverberated. It reached its climax in the Scopes case in the summer of 1925.

The Tennessee legislature, dominated by Fundamentalists, passed a bill providing that "it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals and all other public schools of the State, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals."

This law had no sooner been placed upon the books than a little group of men in the sleepy town of Dayton, Tennessee, decided to put it to the test. George Rappelyea, a mining engineer, was drinking lemon phosphates in Robinson's drug store with John Thomas Scopes, a likeable young man of twenty-four who taught biology at the Central High School, and two or three others. Rappelyea proposed that Scopes should allow himself to be caught red-handed in the act of teaching the theory of evolution to an innocent child, and Scopes—half serious, half in joke—agreed. Their motives were apparently mixed; it was characteristic of the times that (according to so friendly a narrator of the incident as Arthur Garfield Hays) Rappelyea declared that their action



would put Dayton on the map. At all events, the illegal deed was shortly perpetrated and Scopes was arrested. William Jennings Bryan forthwith volunteered his services to the prosecution; Rappelyea wired the Civil Liberties Union in New York and secured for Scopes the legal assistance of Clarence Darrow, Dudley Field Malone, and Arthur Garfield Hays; the trial was set for July, 1925, and Dayton suddenly discovered that it was to be put on the map with a vengeance.

There was something to be said for the right of the people to decide what should be taught in their tax-supported schools, even if what they decided upon was ridiculous. But the issue of the Scopes case, as the great mass of newspaper readers saw it, was nothing so abstruse as the rights of taxpayers versus academic freedom. In the eyes of the public, the trial was a battle between Fundamentalism on the one hand and twentieth-century skepticism (assisted by Modernism) on the other. The champions of both causes were headliners. Bryan had been three times a candidate for the Presidency, had been Secretary of State, and was a famous orator; he was the perfect embodiment of old-fashioned American idealism—friendly, naïve, provincial. Darrow, a radical, a friend of the under dog, an agnostic, had recently jumped into the limelight of publicity through his defense of Leopold and Loeb. Even Tex Rickard could hardly have staged a more promising contest than a battle between these two men over such an emotional issue.

It was a strange trial. Into the quiet town of Dayton flocked gaunt Tennessee farmers and their families in mule-drawn wagons and ramshackle Fords; quiet, godly people in overalls and gingham and black, ready to defend their faith against the "foreigners," yet curious to know what this new-fangled evolutionary theory might be. Revivalists of every sort flocked there, too, held their meetings on the outskirts of the town under the light of flares, and tacked up

signs on the trees about the courthouse—"Read Your Bible Daily for One Week," and "Be Sure Your Sins Will Find You Out," and at the very courthouse gate:

#### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The sweetheart love of Jesus Christ and Paradise Street is at hand. Do you want to be a sweet angel? Forty days of prayer. Itemize your sins and iniquities for eternal life. If you come clean, God will talk back to you in voice.

Yet the atmosphere of Dayton was not simply that of rural piety. Hot-dog venders and lemonade venders set up their stalls along the streets as if it were circus day. Booksellers hawked volumes on biology. Over a hundred newspaper men poured into the town. The Western Union installed twenty-two telegraph operators in a room off a grocery store. In the courtroom itself, as the trial impended, reporters and camera men crowded alongside grim-faced Tennessee countrymen; there was a buzz of talk, a shuffle of feet, a ticking of telegraph instruments, an air of suspense like that of a first-night performance at the theater. Judge, defendant, and counsel were stripped to their shirt sleeves—Bryan in a pongee shirt turned in at the neck, Darrow with lavender suspenders, Judge Raulston with galluses of a more sober judicial hue—yet fashion was not wholly absent: the news was flashed over the wires to the whole country that the judge's daughters, as they entered the courtroom with him, wore rolled stockings like any metropolitan flapper's. Court was opened with a pious prayer—and motion-picture operators climbed upon tables and chairs to photograph the leading participants in the trial from every possible angle. The evidence ranged all the way from the admission of fourteen-year-old Howard Morgan that Scopes had told him about evolution and that it hadn't hurt him any, to the estimate of a zoologist that life had begun something like six hundred million years ago (an assertion which caused gasps and titters of disbelief from the rustics in the audience). And

meanwhile two million words were being telegraphed out of Dayton, the trial was being broadcast by the *Chicago Tribune's* station WGN, the Dreamland Circus at Coney Island offered "Zip" to the Scopes defense as a "missing link," cable companies were reporting enormous increases in transatlantic cable tolls, and news agencies in London were being besieged with requests for more copy from Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Russia, China, and Japan. Ballyhoo had come to Dayton.

It was a bitter trial. Attorney-General Stewart of Tennessee cried out against the insidious doctrine which was "undermining the faith of Tennessee's children and robbing them of their chance of eternal life." Bryan charged Darrow with having only one purpose, "to slur at the Bible." Darrow spoke of Bryan's "fool religion." Yet again and again the scene verged on farce. The climax—both of bitterness and of farce—came on the afternoon of July 20th, when on the spur of the moment Hays asked that the defense be permitted to put Bryan on the stand as an expert on the Bible, and Bryan consented.

So great was the crowd that afternoon that the judge had decided to move the court outdoors, to a platform built against the courthouse under the maple trees. Benches were set out before it. The reporters sat on the benches, on the ground, anywhere, and scribbled their stories. On the outskirts of the seated crowd a throng stood in the hot sunlight which streamed down through the trees. And on the platform sat the shirt-sleeved Clarence Darrow, a Bible on his knee, and put the Fundamentalist champion through one of the strangest examinations which ever took place in a court of law.

He asked Bryan about Jonah and the whale, Joshua and the sun, where Cain got his wife, the date of the Flood, the significance of the Tower of Babel. Bryan affirmed his belief that the world was created in 4004 B.C. and the Flood

occurred in or about 2348 B.C.; that Eve was literally made out of Adam's rib; that the Tower of Babel was responsible for the diversity of languages in the world; and that a "big fish" had swallowed Jonah. When Darrow asked him if he had ever discovered where Cain got his wife, Bryan answered: "No, sir; I leave the agnostics to hunt for her." When Darrow inquired, "Do you say you do not believe that there were any civilizations on this earth that reach back beyond five thousand years?" Bryan stoutly replied, "I am not satisfied by any evidence I have seen." Tempers were getting frazzled by the strain and the heat; once Darrow declared that his purpose in examining Bryan was "to show up Fundamentalism . . . to prevent bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the educational system of the United States," and Bryan jumped up, his face purple, and shook his fist at Darrow, crying, "To protect the word of God against the greatest atheist and agnostic in the United States!"

It was a savage encounter, and a tragic one for the ex-Secretary of State. He was defending what he held most dear. He was making—though he did not know it—his last appearance before the great American public which had once done him honor (he died scarcely a week later). And he was being covered with humiliation. The sort of religious faith which he represented could not take the witness stand and face reason as a prosecutor.

On the morning of July 21st Judge Raulston mercifully refused to let the ordeal of Bryan continue and expunged the testimony of the previous afternoon. Scopes's lawyers had been unable to get any of their scientific evidence before the jury, and now they saw that their only chance of making the sort of defense they had planned for lay in giving up the case and bringing it before the Tennessee Supreme Court on appeal. Scopes was promptly found guilty and fined one hundred dollars. The State Supreme

Court later upheld the anti-evolution law but freed Scopes on a technicality, thus preventing further appeal.

Theoretically, Fundamentalism had won, for the law stood. Yet really Fundamentalism had lost. Legislators might go on passing anti-evolution laws, and in the hinterlands the pious might still keep their religion locked in a science-proof compartment of their minds; but civilized opinion everywhere had regarded the Dayton trial with amazement and amusement, and the slow drift away from Fundamentalist certainty continued.

The reporters, the movie men, the syndicate writers, the telegraph operators shook the dust of Dayton from their feet. This monkey trial had been a good show for the front pages, but maybe it was a little too highbrow in its implications. What next? . . . How about a good clean fight without any biology in it?

## § 5

The year 1925 drew slowly toward its close. The *Shenandoah*—a great navy dirigible—was wrecked, and for a few days the country supped on horror. The Florida real-estate boom reached its dizziest height. And then the football season revealed what the ballyhoo technic could do for a football star. Nobody needed a course in biology to appreciate Red Grange.

The Post-war Decade was a great sporting era. More men were playing golf than ever before—playing it in baggy plus-fours, with tassels at the knee and checked stockings. There were five thousand golf-courses in the United States, there were said to be two million players, and it was estimated that half a billion dollars was spent annually on the game. The ability to play it had become a part of the almost essential equipment of the aspiring business executive. The country club had become the focus of social life in hun-

dreds of communities. But it was an even greater era for watching sports than for taking part in them. Promoters, chambers of commerce, newspaper-owners, sports writers, press agents, radio broadcasters, all found profit in exploiting the public's mania for sporting shows and its willingness to be persuaded that the great athletes of the day were supermen. Never before had such a blinding light of publicity been turned upon the gridiron, the diamond, and the prize ring.

Men who had never learned until the nineteen-twenties the difference between a brassie and a niblick grabbed their five-star editions to read about Bobby Jones's exploits with his redoubtable putter, Calamity Jane. There was big money in being a successful golf professional: Walter Hagen's income for several years ranged between forty and eighty thousand dollars, and for a time he received thirty thousand a year and a house for lending the prestige of his presence and his name to a Florida real-estate development. World's Series baseball crowds broke all records. So intense was the excitement over football that stadia seating fifty and sixty and seventy thousand people were filled to the last seat when the big teams met, while scores of thousands more sat in warm living-rooms to hear the play-by-play story over the radio and to be told by Graham McNamee that it certainly was cold on the upper rim of the amphitheater. The Yale Athletic Association was said to have taken in over a million dollars in ticket money in a single season. Teams which represented supposed institutions of learning went barnstorming for weeks at a time, imbibing what academic instruction they might on the sleeping-car between the Yankee Stadium and Chicago or between Texas and the Tournament of Roses at Pasadena. More Americans could identify Knute Rockne as the Notre Dame coach than could tell who was the presiding officer of the United States Senate. The fame of star football players, to be sure, was

ephemeral compared with that of Jones in golf, or of Ruth in baseball, or of Tilden in tennis. Aldrich, Owen, Bo McMillin, Ernie Nevers, Grange, the Four Horsemen, Benny Friedman, Caldwell, Cagle, and Albie Booth all reigned briefly. But the case of Red Grange may illustrate to what heights a hero of the stadium could rise in the consulship of Calvin Coolidge, when pockets were full and the art of ballyhoo was young and vigorous.

"Harold E. Grange—the middle name is Edward—was born in Forksville, Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, on June 13, 1903," announced a publicity item sent out to the press to put the University of Illinois on the map by glorifying its greatest product. "His father, Lyle N. Grange, in his youth had been the king of lumberjacks in the Pennsylvania mountains, being renowned for his strength, skill, and daring. His mother, a sweet and lovely girl, died when 'Red' was five years old, and it was this which determined his father to move from Pennsylvania to Wheaton, Illinois. . . . The father, who never married again, is deputy sheriff at Wheaton."

But the publicity item (which continues in this rhapsodic tone for many a paragraph) is perhaps too leisurely. Suffice it to say that Red Grange—the "Wheaton iceman," as they called him—played football exceedingly well for the University of Illinois, so well that at the end of the season of 1925 (his senior year) he decided not to bother any further with education at the moment, but to reap the harvest of his fame. Let a series of items summarizing the telegraphic press dispatches tell the story:

Nov. 2—Grange is carried two miles by students.

Nov. 3—His football jersey will be framed at Illinois.

Nov. 11—Admirers circulate petition nominating him for Congress despite his being under age. Is silent on \$40,000 offer from New York Giants for three games.

Nov. 17—Is offered \$120,000 a year by real-estate firm.

- Nov. 21—Plays last game with Illinois, turns professional.  
 Nov. 22—Signs with Chicago Bears.  
 Nov. 26—Plays first professional game with Bears and collects \$12,000.  
 Dec. 6—Collects \$30,000 in first New York game.  
 Dec. 7—Signs \$300,000 movie contract with Arrow Picture Corporation; may earn \$100,000 by June.  
 Dec. 8—Is presented to President Coolidge.

The public is fickle, however. Within a few months Gertrude Ederle and the first mother to swim the English Channel were being welcomed in New York with thunderous applause. Dempsey and Tunney were preparing for their Philadelphia fight, and the spotlight had left Red Grange. Five years later he was reported to be working in a night club in Hollywood, while that other hero of the backfield, Caldwell of Yale, was running a lunchroom in New Haven. *Sic transit.*

The public mania for vicarious participation in sport reached its climax in the two Dempsey-Tunney fights, the first at Philadelphia in September, 1926, the second at Chicago a year later. Prize-fighting, once outlawed, had become so respectable in American eyes that gentlefolk crowded into the ringside seats and a clergyman on Long Island had to postpone a meeting of his vestrymen so that they might listen in on one of the big bouts. The newspapers covered acres of paper for weeks beforehand with gossip and prognostications from the training-camps; public interest was whipped up by such devices as signed articles—widely syndicated—in which the contestants berated each other (both sets of articles, in one case, being written by the same "ghost"), and even a paper so traditionally conservative in its treatment of sports as the *New York Times* announced the result of a major bout with three streamer headlines running all the way across its front page. One hundred and thirty thousand people watched Tunney outbox a weary Dempsey at Philadelphia and paid nearly two million dol-



lars for the privilege; one hundred and forty-five thousand people watched the return match at Chicago and the receipts reached the incredible sum of \$2,600,000. Compare that sum with the trifling \$452,000 taken in when Dempsey gained his title from Willard in 1919 and you have a measure of what had happened in a few years. So enormous was the amphitheater at Chicago that two-thirds of the people in the outermost seats did not know who had won when the fight was over. Nor was the audience limited to the throng in Chicago, for millions more—forty millions, the radio people claimed—heard the breathless story of it, blow by blow, over the radio. During the seventh round—when Tunney fell and the referee, by delaying the beginning of his count until Dempsey had reached his corner, gave Tunney some thirteen seconds to recover—five Americans dropped dead of heart failure at their radios. Five other deaths were attributed to the excitement of hearing the radio story of the fight.

Equally remarkable was the aftermath of these two mighty contests. Dempsey had been a mauler at the beginning of the decade; he was an ex-mauler at its end. Not so Tunney. From the pinnacle of his fame he stepped neatly off on to those upper levels of literary and fashionable society in which heavyweight champions, haloed by publicity, were newly welcome. Having received \$1,742,282 in three years for his prowess in the ring, Tunney lectured on Shakespeare before Professor Phelps's class at Yale, went for a walking trip in Europe with Thornton Wilder (author of the best-selling novel of the year, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*), married a young gentlewoman of Greenwich, Connecticut, and after an extensive stay abroad returned to the United States with his bride, giving out on his arrival a prepared statement which, if not quite Shakespearian or Wilderesque in its style, at least gave evidence of effort:

It is hard to realize as our ship passes through the Narrows that fifteen months have elapsed since the *Mauretania* was carrying me in the other direction. During those fifteen months Mrs. Tunney and I have visited many countries and have met some very interesting people. We thoroughly enjoyed our travels, but find the greatest joy of all in again being home with our people and friends.

The echo of a rumor at home that I am contemplating returning to the boxing game to defend the heavyweight championship reached me in Italy. This is in no sense true, for I have permanently ended my public career. My great work now is to live quietly and simply, for this manner of living brings me most happiness.

The sports writers were decidedly cool toward Tunney's post-boxing career. But he was simply exercising the ancient democratic prerogative of rising higher than his source. Ballyhoo had exalted him to the skies, and he took advantage of it to leave the dubious atmosphere of the pugilistic world and seek more salubrious airs.

## § 6

As 1925 gave way to 1926, the searchlight of public attention had shifted from Red Grange to the marriage of Irving Berlin and Ellin Mackay, showing that the curiosity of millions is no respecter of personal privacy; to the gallant rescue of the men of the steamship *Antinoë* in mid-ocean by Captain Fried of the *President Roosevelt*; to the exclusion from the United States of Vera, Countess Cathcart, on the uncomplimentary ground of moral turpitude; to Byrd's daring flight over the North Pole; and, as the summer of 1926 arrived, to the disappearance from a bathing beach of Aimee Semple McPherson, evangelist of a Four-Square Gospel made in California—a disappearance that was to prove the first of a series of opera-bouffe episodes which for years attracted wide-eyed tourists in droves to Mrs. McPherson's Angelus Temple.

The summer passed—the summer when the English

Channel was full of swimmers, and the brown jacket of *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* ornamented thousands of cottage tables, girls in knee-length skirts and horizontally striped sweaters were learning to dance the Charleston, and the Philadelphia Sesqui-centennial was sinking deeper and deeper into the red despite the aid of the Dempsey-Tunney fight. Toward the season's end there was a striking demonstration of what astute press-agentry could do to make a national sensation. A young man named Rudolph Alfonzo Raffaele Pierre Filibert Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguolla died in New York at the age of thirty-one. The love-making of Rudolph Valentino (as he had understandably preferred to call himself) had quickened the pulses of innumerable motion-picture addicts; with his sideburns and his passionate air, "the sheik" had set the standard for masculine sex appeal. But his lying in state in an undertaker's establishment on Broadway would hardly have attracted a crowd which stretched through eleven blocks if his manager had not arranged the scenes of grief with uncanny skill, and if Harry C. Klemfuss, the undertaker's press agent, had not provided the newspapers with everything they could desire—such as photographs, distributed in advance, of the chamber where the actor's body would lie, and posed photographs of the funeral cortège. (One of these latter pictures, according to Silas Bent, was on the streets in one newspaper before the funeral procession started.) With such practical assistance, the press gave itself to the affair so whole-heartedly that mobs rioted about the undertaker's and scores of people were injured. Sweet are the uses of publicity: Valentino had been heavily in debt when he died, but his posthumous films, according to his manager's subsequent testimony, turned the debt into a \$600,000 balance to the credit of his estate. High-minded citizens regretted that the death of Charles William Eliot, which occurred at about the same time, occasioned no such spectacular lamentations. But the

president emeritus of Harvard had had no professional talent to put over his funeral in a big way.

Tunney beat Dempsey, a hurricane contributed the *coup-de-grâce* to the Florida boom, Queen Marie of Rumania sniffed the profits of ballyhoo from afar and made a royal visit to the United States; and then for months on end in the winter of 1926-27 the American people waded deep in scandal and crime.

It was four long years since the Reverend Edward W. Hall and Mrs. Eleanor R. Mills had been found murdered near the crab-apple tree by DeRussey's Lane outside New Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1922 the grand jury had found no indictment. But in 1926 a tabloid newspaper in search of more circulation dug up what purported to be important new evidence and got the case reopened. Mrs. Hall was arrested—at such an unholy hour of the night that the reporters and photographers of this tabloid got a scoop—and she and her two brothers, Henry and Willie Stevens, were brought to trial, thus providing thrills for the readers not only of the tabloid in question, but of every other newspaper in the United States.

The most sensational scene in this most sensational trial of the decade took place when Jane Gibson, the "pig woman," who was supposed to be dying, was brought from her hospital to the courtroom on a stretcher and placed on a bed facing the jury. Mrs. Gibson told a weird story. She had been pestered by corn-robbers, it seemed, and on the night of the murder, hearing the rattle of a wagon that she thought might contain the robbers, she saddled Jenny, her mule, and followed the wagon down DeRussey's Lane, "peeking and peeking and peeking." She saw a car in the Lane, with two people in it whom she identified as Mrs. Hall and Willie Stevens. She tethered Jenny to a cedar tree, heard the sound of a quarrel and a voice saying, "Explain these letters"; she saw Henry and Willie Stevens in the gleam of a

flashlight, she heard shots, and then she fled in terror all the way home—only to find that she had left a moccasin behind. Despite her fear, she went all the way back to get that moccasin, and heard what she thought was the screeching of an owl, but found it was a woman crying—“a big white-haired woman doing something with her hand, crying something.” She said this woman was Mrs. Hall. All this testimony the “pig woman” gave from her bed in a wailing voice, while trained nurses stood beside her and took her pulse; then, crying out to the defendants, “I have told the truth! So help me God! And you know I’ve told the truth!” she was borne from the room.

The testimony of the “pig woman” did not gain in force from what was brought out about her previous checkered career; it would have made even less impression upon the jury had they known that their “dying witness,” whose appearance in the courtroom had been so ingeniously staged, was destined to live four years more. Mrs. Hall and her brothers came magnificently through their ordeal, slow-witted Willie Stevens in particular delighting millions of murder-trial fans by the way in which he stoutly resisted the efforts of Senator Simpson to bullyrag him into confusion. The new evidence dug up by the tabloid—consisting chiefly of a calling-card which was supposed to have Willie Stevens’s fingerprint on it—did not impress the jury.

But though the prosecution’s case thus collapsed, the reputation of the Stevens family had been butchered to make a Roman holiday of the first magnitude for newspaper readers. Five million words were written and sent from Somerville, New Jersey, during the first eleven days of the trial. Twice as many newspaper men were there as at Dayton. The reporters included Mary Roberts Rinehart, the novelist, Billy Sunday, the revivalist, and James Mills, the husband of the murdered choir-singer; and the man who had claimed the mantle of Bryan as the leader of Funda-

mentalism, the Reverend John Roach Straton, wrote a daily editorial moralizing about the case. Over wires jacked into the largest telegraph switchboard in the world traveled the tidings of lust and crime to every corner of the United States, and the public lapped them up and cried for more.

So insistently did they cry that when, a few short months later, an art editor named Albert Snyder was killed with a sash-weight by his wife and her lover, a corset salesman named Judd Gray, once more the forces of ballyhoo got into action. In this case there was no mystery, nor was the victim highly placed; the only excuses for putting the Snyder-Gray trial on the front page were that it involved a sex triangle and that the Snyders were ordinary people living in an ordinary New York suburb—the sort of people with whom the ordinary reader could easily identify himself. Yet so great was the demand for vicarious horrors that once more the great Western Union switchboard was brought into action, an even more imposing galaxy of special writers interpreted the sordid drama (including David Wark Griffith, Peggy Joyce, and Will Durant, as well as Mrs. Rinehart, Billy Sunday, and Doctor Straton), and once more the American people tasted blood.

In the interval between the Hall-Mills case and the Snyder-Gray case, they had had a chance to roll an even riper scandal on their tongues. Frances Heenan Browning, known to the multitude as "Peaches," brought suit for separation from Edward W. Browning, a New York real-estate man who had a penchant for giving to very young girls the delights of a Cinderella. Supposedly sober and reputable newspapers recited the unedifying details of "Daddy" Browning's adventures; and when the *New York Graphic*, a tabloid, printed a "composograph" of Browning in pajamas shouting "Woof! Woof! Don't be a goof!" to his half-clad wife because—according to the caption—she "refused to parade nude," even the *Daily News*, which in the past had

shown no distaste for scandal, expressed its fear that if such things went on the public would be "drenched in obscenity."

A great many people felt as the *Daily News* did, and regarded with dismay the depths to which the public taste seemed to have fallen. Surely a change must come, they thought. This carnival of commercialized degradation could not continue.

The change came—suddenly.

### § 7

The owner of the Brevoort and Lafayette Hotels in New York, Raymond Orteig, had offered—way back in 1919—a prize of \$25,000 for the first non-stop flight between New York and Paris. Only a few days after the conclusion of the Snyder-Gray trial, three planes were waiting for favorable weather conditions to hop off from Roosevelt Field, just outside New York, in quest of this prize: the *Columbia*, which was to be piloted by Clarence Chamberlin and Lloyd Bertaud; the *America*, with Lieutenant-Commander Byrd of North Pole fame in command; and the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which had abruptly arrived from the Pacific coast with a lone young man named Charles A. Lindbergh at the controls. There was no telling which of the three planes would get off first, but clearly the public favorite was the young man from the West. He was modest, he seemed to know his business, there was something particularly daring about his idea of making the perilous journey alone, and he was as attractive-looking a youngster as ever had faced a camera man. The reporters—to his annoyance—called him "Lucky Lindy" and the "Flying Fool." The spotlight of publicity was upon him. Not yet, however, was he a god.

On the evening of May 19, 1927, Lindbergh decided that

although it was drizzling on Long Island, the weather reports gave a chance of fair skies for his trip and he had better get ready. He spent the small hours of the next morning in sleepless preparations, went to Curtiss Field, received further weather news, had his plane trundled to Roosevelt Field and fueled, and a little before eight o'clock—on the morning of May 20th—climbed in and took off for Paris.

Then something very like a miracle took place.

No sooner had the word been flashed along the wires that Lindbergh had started than the whole population of the country became united in the exaltation of a common emotion. Young and old, rich and poor, farmer and stockbroker, Fundamentalist and skeptic, highbrow and lowbrow, all with one accord fastened their hopes upon the young man in the *Spirit of St. Louis*. To give a single instance of the intensity of their mood: at the Yankee Stadium in New York, where the Maloney-Sharkey fight was held on the evening of the 20th, forty thousand hard-boiled boxing fans rose as one man and stood with bared heads in impressive silence when the announcer asked them to pray for Lindbergh. The next day came the successive reports of Lindbergh's success—he had reached the Irish coast, he was crossing over England, he was over the Channel, he had landed at Le Bourget to be enthusiastically mobbed by a vast crowd of Frenchmen—and the American people went almost mad with joy and relief. And when the reports of Lindbergh's first few days in Paris showed that he was behaving with charming modesty and courtesy, millions of his countrymen took him to their hearts as they had taken no other human being in living memory.

Every record for mass excitement and mass enthusiasm in the age of ballyhoo was smashed during the next few weeks. Nothing seemed to matter, either to the newspapers or to the people who read them, but Lindbergh and his story. On



the day the flight was completed the *Washington Star* sold 16,000 extra copies, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 40,000, the *New York Evening World* 114,000. The huge headlines which described Lindbergh's triumphal progress from day to day in newspapers from Maine to Oregon showed how thorough was public agreement with the somewhat extravagant dictum of the *Evening World* that Lindbergh had performed "the greatest feat of a solitary man in the records of the human race." Upon his return to the United States, a single Sunday issue of a single paper contained one hundred columns of text and pictures devoted to him. Nobody appeared to question the fitness of President Coolidge's action in sending a cruiser of the United States navy to bring this young private citizen and his plane back from France. He was greeted in Washington at a vast open-air gathering at which the President made—according to Charles Merz—"the longest and most impressive address since his annual message to Congress." The Western Union having provided form messages for telegrams of congratulations to Lindbergh on his arrival, 55,000 of them were sent to him—and were loaded on a truck and trundled after him in the parade through Washington. One telegram, from Minneapolis, was signed with 17,500 names and made up a scroll 520 feet long, under which ten messenger boys staggered. After the public welcome in New York, the Street Cleaning Department gathered up 1,800 tons of paper which had been torn up and thrown out of windows of office buildings to make a snowstorm of greeting—1,800 tons as against a mere 155 tons swept up after the premature Armistice celebration of November 7, 1918!

Lindbergh was commissioned Colonel, and received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Congressional Medal of Honor, and so many foreign decorations and honorary memberships that to repeat the list would be a weary task.

He was offered two and a half million dollars for a tour of the world by air, and \$700,000 to appear in the films; his signature was sold for \$1,600; a Texas town was named for him, a thirteen-hundred-foot Lindbergh tower was proposed for the city of Chicago, "the largest dinner ever tendered to an individual in modern history" was consumed in his honor, and a staggering number of streets, schools, restaurants, and corporations sought to share the glory of his name.

Nor was there any noticeable group of dissenters from all this hullabaloo. Whatever else people might disagree about, they joined in praise of him.

To appreciate how extraordinary was this universal outpouring of admiration and love—for the word love is hardly too strong—one must remind oneself of two or three facts.

Lindbergh's flight was not the first crossing of the Atlantic by air. Alcock and Brown had flown direct from Newfoundland to Ireland in 1919. That same year the N-C 4, with five men aboard, had crossed by way of the Azores, and the British dirigible R-34 had flown from Scotland to Long Island with 31 men aboard, and then had turned about and made a return flight to England. The German dirigible ZR-3 (later known as the *Los Angeles*) had flown from Friedrichshafen to Lakehurst, New Jersey, in 1924 with 32 people aboard. Two Round-the-World American army planes had crossed the North Atlantic by way of Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland in 1924. The novelty of Lindbergh's flight lay only in the fact that he went all the way from New York to Paris instead of jumping off from Newfoundland, that he reached his precise objective, and that he went alone.

Furthermore, there was little practical advantage in such an exploit. It brought about a boom in aviation, to be sure, but a not altogether healthy one, and it led many a flyer to hop off blindly for foreign shores in emulation of Lind-

bergh and be drowned. Looking back on the event after a lapse of years, and stripping it of its emotional connotations, one sees it simply as a daring stunt flight—the longest up to that time—by a man who did not claim to be anything but a stunt flyer. Why, then, this idolization of Lindbergh?

The explanation is simple. A disillusioned nation fed on cheap heroics and scandal and crime was revolting against the low estimate of human nature which it had allowed itself to entertain. For years the American people had been spiritually starved. They had seen their early ideals and illusions and hopes one by one worn away by the corrosive influence of events and ideas—by the disappointing aftermath of the war, by scientific doctrines and psychological theories which undermined their religion and ridiculed their sentimental notions, by the spectacle of graft in politics and crime on the city streets, and finally by their recent newspaper diet of smut and murder. Romance, chivalry, and self-dedication had been debunked; the heroes of history had been shown to have feet of clay, and the saints of history had been revealed as people with queer complexes. There was the god of business to worship—but a suspicion lingered that he was made of brass. Ballyhoo had given the public contemporary heroes to bow down before—but these contemporary heroes, with their fat profits from moving-picture contracts and ghost-written syndicated articles, were not wholly convincing. Something that people needed, if they were to live at peace with themselves and with the world, was missing from their lives. And all at once Lindbergh provided it. Romance, chivalry, self-dedication—here they were, embodied in a modern Galahad for a generation which had foresworn Galahads. Lindbergh did not accept the moving-picture offers that came his way, he did not sell testimonials, did not boast, did not get himself involved in scandal, conducted himself with unerring taste—and was

handsome and brave withal. The machinery of ballyhoo was ready and waiting to lift him up where every eye could see him. Is it any wonder that the public's reception of him took on the aspects of a vast religious revival?

Lindbergh did not go back on his admirers. He undertook a series of exhibition flights and good-will flights—successfully and with quiet dignity. He married a daughter of the ambassador to Mexico, and in so doing delighted the country by turning the tables on ballyhoo itself—by slipping away with his bride on a motor-boat and remaining hidden for days despite the efforts of hundreds of newspaper men to spy upon his honeymoon. Wherever he went, crowds fought for a chance to be near him, medals were pinned upon him, tributes were showered upon him, his coming and going was news. He packed away a good-sized fortune earned chiefly as consultant for aviation companies, but few people grudged him that. Incredibly, he kept his head and his instinct for fine conduct.

And he remained a national idol.

Even three and four years after his flight, the roads about his New Jersey farm were blocked on week-ends with the cars of admirers who wanted to catch a glimpse of him, and it was said that he could not even send his shirts to a laundry because they did not come back—they were too valuable as souvenirs. His picture hung in hundreds of schoolrooms and in thousands of houses. No living American—no dead American, one might almost say, save perhaps Abraham Lincoln—commanded such unswerving fealty. You might criticize Coolidge or Hoover or Ford or Edison or Bobby Jones or any other headline hero; but if you decried anything that Lindbergh did, you knew that you had wounded your auditors. For Lindbergh was a god.

Pretty good, one reflects, for a stunt flyer. But also, one must add, pretty good for the American people. They had

shown that they had better taste in heroes than anyone would have dared to predict during the years which immediately preceded the 20th of May, 1927.

### § 8

After Lindbergh's flight the profits of heroism were so apparent that a horde of seekers after cash and glory appeared, not all of whom seemed to realize that one of the things which had endeared Lindbergh to his admirers had been his indifference both to easy money and to applause. The formula was simple. You got an airplane, some financial backing, and a press agent, and made the first non-stop flight from one place to another place (there were still plenty of places that nobody had flown between). You arranged in advance to sell your personal story to a syndicate if you were successful. If necessary you could get a good deal of your equipment without paying for it, on condition that the purveyors of your oil or your flying suit or your five-foot shelf might say how useful you had found it. Having landed at your destination—and on the front pages—you promptly sold your book, your testimonials, your appearance in vaudeville, your appearance in the movies, or whatever else there was demand for. If you did not know how to pilot a plane you could still be a passenger; a woman passenger, in fact, had better news value than a male pilot. And if flying seemed a little hazardous for your personal taste, you could get useful publicity by giving a prize for other people to fly after.

When Chamberlin followed Lindbergh across the Atlantic, Charles A. Levine, the owner of the plane, was an extremely interested passenger. He got an official welcome at New York. Everybody was getting official welcomes at New York. Grover Whalen, the well-dressed Police Commis-

sioner, was taking incessant advantage of what Alva Johnston called the great discovery that anybody riding up Broadway at noon with a motorcycle escort would find thousands of people gathered there in honor of luncheon. British open golf champions, Channel swimmers, and the Italian soccer team were greeted by Mr. Whalen as deferentially as the Persian Minister of Finance and the Mayor of Leipzig, and it was always fun for the citizenry to have an excuse to throw ticker tape and fragments of the Bronx telephone directory out the window.

Byrd and his men hopped off from Roosevelt Field a few weeks after Chamberlin and Levine, and came down in the sea—but so close to the French coast that they waded ashore. Brock and Schlee not only crossed the Atlantic, but continued on in a series of flights till they reached Japan. And then a good-looking dentist's assistant from Lakeland, Florida, named Ruth Elder, who had been taking flying lessons from George Haldeman, got a citrus-grower and a real-estate man to back her, and Haldeman to pilot her, and set out to become the first woman transatlantic airplane rider. She dropped into the sea much too far out to wade ashore, as it happened; but what matter? She and Haldeman were picked up providentially by a tanker; her manager did good business for her; and she got her welcome—though the City of New York spent only \$333.90 on greeting her, as compared with more than \$1,000 for Levine, \$12,000 for the President of the Irish Free State, \$26,000 for Byrd, and \$71,000 for Lindbergh.

After Ruth Elder there were so many flights, successful or disastrous, that one could hardly keep track of them. They were always front-page news, but they were less exciting than the unveiling of the new Ford (in December, 1927) and the sinking of the steamship *Vestris*, which (late in 1928) was so hysterically reported that one might have

imagined it to be the greatest marine disaster in history. There were no more Lindberghs.

The procession of sporting heroes continued. Bobby Jones went on from triumph to triumph, until no one could doubt that he was the greatest golfer of all time. Babe Ruth remained the home-run king. Cagle and Booth gave the football writers a chance to be the romantic fellows they longed to be. Tilden was slipping, but could still beat almost anybody but a Frenchman. Prize-fighting, however, languished, and there were signs that the public taste in sporting exhibitions was becoming a little jaded. The efforts to find something novel enough to arouse the masters of ballyhoo became almost pathological: Marathon dancers clung to one another by the hour and day and week, shuffling about the floor in an agony of weariness, and the unhappy participants in C. C. Pyle's "Bunion Derby" ran across the continent with results painful both to their feet and to Mr. Pyle's fortunes as a promoter. Thousands stood and gaped while Alvin Shipwreck Kelly sat on a flagpole. There was still money in breaking records, even if your achievement was that of perching on a flagpole in Baltimore for 23 days and 7 hours, having your food and drink hoisted to you in a bucket, and hiring a man to shout at you if you showed signs of dozing for more than twenty minutes at a time. But nobody seemed to be persuaded that there was anything epic about Mr. Kelly. Flagpole sitting and Marathon dancing were just freak shows to watch in an idle moment.

Perhaps the bloom of youth was departing from ballyhoo: the technic was becoming a little too obvious. Perhaps Lindbergh had spoiled the public for lesser heroes. Perhaps the grim execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 and the presidential campaign of 1928 reminded a well-fed people that there were such things as public issues, after all. But per-

haps, too, there was some significance in the fact that in March, 1928, only a few months after the new Ford appeared and less than a year after Lindbergh's flight, the Big Bull Market went into its sensational phase. A ten-point gain in Radio common in a single day promised more immediate benefits than all the non-stop flyers and heavyweight champions in the world.