

It Seems to Me

by
HEYWOOD BROUN

I HOPE I've never pretended to be hardboiled. I'm not and I don't want to be. As a matter of fact the hardboiled reporter who struts his stuff in plays and pictures is a fake. Of course, some newspaper men affect the pose. They are romantic enough to want to emulate the glamorous heroes of the screen and in addition they feel the need of insulation against the impact of things which may come up suddenly in the course of a day's work.

Accordingly, nobody on a paper wants to be put in a position where he is compelled to say, "I'm shocked." He doesn't mind admitting that he's "sore" or "good and mad," but "shocked" is different.

Nevertheless, I'm shocked right now. I've just seen a newspaper picture captioned: "A spectator at the Hauptmann trial wearing one of the souvenir ladders now peddled in Flemington." The picture shows a smug-faced young woman with a toy ladder pinned outside her fur coat. Upon her face there is a silly grin. It is quite evident that the lady thinks she is most comical.

What comment short of profanity can one make in such circumstances? This seems to me a new all time low in brazen vulgarity. And I wish I had a better word than "vulgarity." Plenty of vulgar things are funny and healthy and necessary for the preservation of the human race.

Sense of So-Called Humor

BUT there are people who make hideous mistakes as to the cue for the entrance of the clowns. I rather imagine that the young lady with the ladder on her lapel is fond of telling her friends that she wouldn't take anything for her sense of humor. And offhand I wouldn't know just what she could take.

Still it is unfair to pick on a single person. If ladders are being peddled at Flemington it must be that there is no lack of customers. A mist rises from Flemington and drifts across the meadows engulfing the millions of America. And this fog contains a deadly gas which eats away the fibers of human decency.

A man is on trial for his life and he is charged with the commission of a horrible crime. But I am beginning to believe that the nature of the proceedings may constitute an even graver offense against the public welfare. No one will ever know the extent of the ravages which may occur when an entire nation is under a barrage of morbid detail. Many of the results of this gas attack will never be identified. Engrossment in the case is so profound and widespread that we are losing sight of all reasonable human values.

Always in Good Humor

I WAS talking to a newspaper man the other day and asking about various friends of mine just now assigned to Flemington. "What's Bill doing down there for the *Morning Blank*?" I asked. "Oh, Bill's doing the daily humorous column," I was informed. "What?" I inquired, a little startled. "Sure, you know, the comic sidelights of the trial. He does a burlesque of Mrs. Hauptmann's Dutch dialect and things like that."

I rest my case and I would never have brought it if the remedy for this Flemington condition were not easy and apparent. It consists in the abolition of capital punishment. Any newspaper man can tell you that the essential curiosity in this case rests upon the fact that headlines play up the fact: "Hauptmann Flight for Life," or "Prisoner in the Shadow of the Chair." I read again that more than 5000 have already applied for permission to witness the execution if a conviction is found.

The death penalty is the added fillip which whets the buried sadism of us all. It is the force which breaks the dykes of decency and floods the land.

Pity for the Many

IT has been said on previous occasions that in a perverse way I always choose to pity the possible criminal and his interests rather than the undoubted victims in any crime. I don't think that's perverse. Of course I feel pity for Mrs. Hauptmann and for the Hauptmann child. Possibly for the prisoner himself. Certainly I don't hate him because I don't understand him at all.

But in arguing against capital punishment and the vicious kind of circuses which follow in its train I am most concerned with those not directly connected with the case at all. Is it really an ideal situation to have millions of youngsters gossiping and arguing as to whether some one is going to get the "hot seat?"

I say that under our present criminal codes and practices every time we kill a man we maim a million nameless ones. Indeed I think that in a psychological way it is still a very actual sense capital punishment is mass murder. We should be done with it.

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Today's Science

BY DAVID DYEY

TWO stars are battling for the attention of the world's astronomers. They are Zeta Aurigae and Nova Herculis. During the late summer and fall, Zeta Aurigae gained the title of "the most interesting star in the heavens." More astronomers, according to Dr. Harlow Shapley of the Harvard College Observatory, were watching the star than had ever watched any one star at the same time.

Then in the weeks before Christmas, Nova Herculis flared forth in the heavens and telescopes everywhere were turned upon it. Both stars continue to hold the interest of the professional and amateur astronomers alike.

Both are special types of stars. Zeta Aurigae is an eclipsing binary, that is, a system of two stars. From our vantage point of the earth, we see one pass in front of the other, thus affording an eclipse.

Nova Herculis, as its name indicates, is a nova or "new star," a star originally so faint as to be invisible to the unaided eye, which suddenly has flared out with great brilliance.

The two stars are interesting to astronomers, not only for themselves, but for the light which they shed upon the many problems of stars in general.

The reader should have no difficulty in finding both these stars for himself on any clear night.

TO find Zeta Aurigae, look straight overhead. You will see a very bright star. This is Capella, brightest star in the constellation of Aurigae and hence sometimes called Alpha Aurigae.

Just southeast of Capella, you will notice a triangle of faint stars. The one farthest from Capella is Zeta Aurigae.

Now to find Nova Herculis. Look to the west about an hour after sunset. You will see the very bright and beautiful star, Vega.

A line from Vega to the northeast bring you a cluster of small stars which form the head of the constellation of Draco or the Dragon. About two-thirds of the way to Draco, you will encounter the new star, Nova Herculis.

CALCULATIONS show that the red component of Zeta Aurigae is a red giant, a star 200 times larger in diameter than the sun. It has a diameter of 175,000 miles. This puts it in a class of giants like Betelgeuse and Antares.

The smaller star is four or five times the diameter of our sun, having a diameter of about 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 miles. Astronomers are not yet certain.

Nova Herculis reached its greatest brilliance on Dec. 22. This fact made many astronomers wonder whether the star of Bethlehem might not have been a nova.

Since Dec. 22, Nova Herculis has been declining in brilliance. Astronomers have been astonished at the rapidity with which the brilliance of Nova Herculis has begun to decrease. The decrease has been almost three times as rapid as was the increase.

—What is a deist?

—A believer in God as revealed in nature, not by special revelation.

THE SUPREME COURT WEIGHS GOLD

BY EARL SPARLING
Times Special Writer

A \$22.50 debt.

A boyish attorney nervously pleading his first case before the United States Supreme Court.

Nine grandfatherly justices in black robes under necessity of rendering a decision which will vitally affect the future not only of America but of the entire world.

It is unprecedented drama now being enacted in Washington, with unparalleled ramifications and potentialities, and a counting room civilization on four continents waits.

Here are some of the things that have already happened — In the White House uncertainty; in Wall Street uneasiness. All markets unsettled and foreign exchange in disorder. Shrewd traders bewildered; great corporations in fear; acquisitive bankers suddenly too timid to buy gold and reap Ponzi profits. In Buenos Aires, Canberra and Oslo, in London, Paris, Berlin and Tokio, in the capitals of the world doubt borders on dismay.

What has happened thus far while the nine judicial patriarchs search their minds is only a hint of what can come if they decide that the \$22.50 brought to their judgment is really worth \$38.10. There are other gold clause cases before the high court in Washington, but this is the first, the cause celebre, which will determine the value of more than a hundred billion dollars of debts.

The issue is simple. Norman C. Norman, New York jeweler, 40 W. 48th-st., holds a \$1000 bond issued by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The semi-annual interest coupon specifies the railroad must pay him \$22.10 in gold of the weight and fineness current the day the bond was sold.

AT that time the American dollar was worth 25.8 grains of gold 9/10 pure. Since then, by presidential proclamation, the dollar has been devalued to 59.06 cents of its former value and is now worth only 15 1/2 grains of gold. That makes \$22.50 in old dollars worth \$38.10 in new dollars. Mr. Norman contends the railroad should pay him the \$38.10.

His attorney, Emanuel Redfield, 31, 420 Lexington-av., fought the issue through the lower state courts and lost. The case reached the State Court of Appeals in Albany and had six weeks' delay because three of the seven justices owned Baltimore & Ohio securities and were, therefore, disqualified to sit. No case can be heard without five members on the bench.

That problem was solved when Justice Henry T. Kellogg retired and Gov. Lehman appointed John T. Loughran to his place. Then the State Court of Appeals heard the case and ruled against the railroad. Gold was being hoarded. International finance was completely disorganized. The situation was one of extreme peril. Our people were slipping toward a lower level of civilization. It was a crisis of the most terrifying character."

How that restrained address affected the United States Supreme Court remains to be seen. Definitely it did not satisfy many economists of the country. The Attorney General spoke as a lawyer to lawyers; he betrayed no knowledge nor gave any warning of the world-wide chaos which might result if the nine aging jurists should decide American gold clause contracts were inviolable and must be met.

IMATE in the day, after the B. & O. attorneys had had their say, Mr. Cummings arose and reminded the court of the crisis of March, 1934, when every bank door in the land was banged shut



Top, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes and at left pediment of the new Supreme Court Building.

and a new President had the problem of opening them, if possible.

Dry, practical, not given to either stammering or eloquence, the Attorney General spoke: "It is enough to say that an emergency of the highest importance confronted the nation. Banks, sound and unsound, were failing daily. Gold was being hoarded. International finance was completely disorganized. The situation was one of extreme peril. Our people were slipping toward a lower level of civilization. It was a crisis of the most terrifying character."

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IN VING in a lawyer-made and lawyer-interpreted civilization, the economists have not yet learned eloquence nor achieved power. Their observations are muted and for the most part delivered in camera. As well as can be determined, this is their consensus:

If the venerable lawyers who constitute our United States Supreme Court uphold gold clause contracts this country and most of the world will be plunged into a renewed deflation which will make the last four years of depression seem like only a training period. More than a hundred billion dollars of internal debt will be manifested. In the first place, the bulk of the money was lent from 1919 to 1929.

In other words, Mr. Mack points out, the Federal government, state and municipal governments and corporations borrowed \$100,000,000,000. Today, to the loaners, the money is worth \$160,000,000,000 in purchasing power.

THE lenders already have \$60,000,000,000 more value than they gave. If, in addition, the Supreme Court rules they must be paid in the equivalent of undervalued gold dollars, \$15.60 per cent more purchasing power than \$15.60 had on the average from 1919 to 1929.

Therefore, from a purchasing standpoint, which is the only true way to consider money, \$22.50 more must still be added. Thus, if the Supreme Court upholds his contention, the New York jeweler will get \$60.96 of purchasing power for the \$22.50 of gold specified in the interest coupon of the bond.

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The index of the purchasing power of the dollar at wholesale averaged 108.52 for that period. Today the wholesale index stands at about 76.7. That means, if you are paid back \$100 you loaned from 1919 to 1929, you are receiving \$160 of purchasing power in terms of the money you loaned.

Ian Mack, World-Telegram

financial writer, an authority in the field, calculates what would happen to the internal debt if the gold clause is upheld as follows:

Total loaned under gold clause \$100,000,000,000

Value in present buying power 160,000,000,000

Total gold clause victory would add 69,000,000,000

Additional buying power of last addition 41,400,000,000

Total buying power of original total loan 270,400,000,000

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