

Hoosier Vagabond

BALBOA, Canal Zone, Jan. 31.—The nearly 4000 white Americans who form the permanent staff of the Panama Canal are almost a race apart. It is a hard thing to describe, and they themselves will describe it in a thousand different ways, all trying to say the same thing.

But to put it in a nutshell, you might say they are people who have had one of the fundamental elements of living taken away from them (or rather, have given it away). And by that I mean the element of chance.

Because the Government does everything for them; because it tells them where to live, what they can do and can't do; leads them by the hand, attends them in work, play, sickness and almost in love, there is no mystery for them to look forward to.

One of their own, who sees them clearly, has called them "stall-fed." They have traded off the spirit of living to insure themselves security. They are voluntary convicts in a lovely penitentiary.

Some friends and I were sitting one evening over a glass of beer. We were dressed in white suits, we were warm, we had money in our pockets. If we clapped our hands, a Negro boy would come running. Around us were palm trees, and beautiful scenery, and the teeming of peoples from all points of the world coming and going.

Same Old Routine

Yet these friends were melancholy. There was in them a vague regret. They knew that 20 years from now they would still be sitting here in the evening after work, drinking beer possibly from the same glasses, talking the same talk.

They knew almost exactly what they would be making, and they could drive around and pick out almost the very house they would be living in after accumulating 25 years' seniority.

Their lives have been so arranged that the only possibility of anything different, anything startling, any change of any kind is a physical accident of some kind!

Now you might say that's what we're all striving for—security, and the sooner the better.

Our Town

THE STATE LIBRARY, the one run by Christopher Coleman, has a copy of "The Torsorial Art Pamphlet" by M. J. Vieira, an Indianapolis barber back in the Seventies.

Posthumous fame came to Mr. Vieira the other day. His name and achievements were mentioned by Richardson Wright in his brand-new book "Grandfather Was Queer," a monumental and highly articulate treatise which has for its thesis the "Early American Wags and Eccentrics from Colonial Times to the Civil War." It took Mr. Wright 355 pages to get them all in. Mr. Vieira turns up on Page 87.

I wouldn't for the world have you believe that I am critical of Mr. Wright's treatment of Mr. Vieira. Quite the contrary, I think it's a bummer. Just the same the subject needs clarity in one or two places and with that in mind and nothing more, I repeat—I submit, for justice, which, for all I know may turn out to be just the thing to plug some of the holes left by Mr. Wright.

To begin with, Mr. Vieira's first name was Manuel—certainly a good thing to know when it comes to handling a man biographically. Moreover, he was in Indianapolis a good deal earlier than anybody suspects. The 1872 directory, for instance, lists him as an "agent." Three years later, in 1875, he clerked for Frank J. Medina who sold hair goods, hoop skirts and corsets at 12 W. Washington St.

Partnership Short-Lived

The reason Mr. Vieira, a born and bred barber, didn't practice his profession when he came to Indianapolis, was probably because the Negroes had the business sewed up. William Russell, for example, had three of the best shops in the city at the time. And William Gulliver, another artist, was just about to retire.

Probably because the Negro barbers were getting old and had enough to retire, the white barbers got a

By Ernie Pyle

True it is. And true that most of these people are far better off than we are.

But it's a quality of perverse human nature to want to go out and win your own security, and to reap satisfaction from the battle and pride from the winning.

Nearly all of us in the States are held by need and circumstance just as firmly to the grindstone as are these people in the Canal Zone. Yet there is something different. We THINK we can quit our job and go romancing for another. And they KNOW their can't.

They have surrendered the important quality of egotism—the eternal conviction that you could do it better than the other guy.

They have given up personal ambition, natural instincts of competition, all the lovely mystery of life, for a security that gives them a life of calm and a vague discontent.

Not Said in Criticism

It is not right to criticize the system that causes this. As massive a thing as the administration of the Panama Canal has to be run this way. And on the other hand, it is wrong to criticize the people who have made these cogs of themselves. Personally, I would go frantic within six months if my life were planned and ordered like theirs, but I'm not saying they've done wrong.

My only criticism is that they aren't very proud of themselves. If I've talked to one I've talked to a dozen who have that inner feeling of contempt for themselves.

It is a vague thing—such a man merely knows that his life is good with the material things, and he is secure and well fed, and yet he isn't content. He feels he has done something wrong to his soul.

And maybe, on second thought, he has. Maybe his uneasy displeasure with himself is the only hope left in human character. Maybe if all 130,000,000 of us could tomorrow turn ourselves over to this great security of the state, there wouldn't be any American people left but merely 130,000,000 cogs dependent on the State.

And maybe, if we could only know, a startling majority of our 130,000,000 have found life too tough and would run like the rats of Hamelin to the luscious graveyard of Being Taken Care Of, if they had the opportunity.

By Anton Scherrer

grip on the business. Anyway, in 1875, we find Mr. Vieira plying his trade with I. B. Henninger as a partner. It was probably the five-chair shop in the old Y. M. C. A. building where the Rink people are.

Apparently the partnership was of short duration because in 1877 Mr. Vieira was listed as working in the Grand Hotel barber shop, a six-chair affair, under the management of Harry Ashcroft.

Mr. Vieira covered the subject from soup to nuts which is to say from prehistoric times to the state of hair culture around here in the Seventies—not only historically, would have you know, but critically as well. Mr. Vieira knew every worthwhile barber shop in the country and the fact that he did sheds considerably more light on how he spent his time before coming to Indianapolis. As early as 1865, for instance, he worked for Antonio M. Delight, the "Prince of Barbers," who had a 12-chair shop at Lake and Clark Sts., Chicago. Tony's charge for a shave was 6 cents, for a haircut 12 cents, for curling 25 cents, and the same price for a shampoo.

500 Mugs—500 Customers

After his stay in Chicago, Mr. Vieira profited by visits to Cincinnati, St. Louis, New York, Boston and Philadelphia. He had his eyes open all the time just like Marco Polo. The Lindell Hotel barber shop in St. Louis run by Prof. William Roberson, a scholarly and very polite Negro, impressed Mr. Vieira most. It had shiny curtains at the windows and vases of flowers all around. Status, too.

In the center of the room was a large and beautiful marble washbasin with a marble pyramid nine feet high on top of which stood a candelabrum with 14 lights. The top light was inside a red globe and it impressed Mr. Vieira like everything. The cup case in Prof. Roberson's establishment, said Mr. Vieira, was undoubtedly the largest in the country. It held 500 shaving mugs, each of which was monogrammed with the initials of a regular customer.

By the time Mr. Vieira got to St. Louis the price of a first class shave had jumped to 15 cents. That was the price in Indianapolis, too, when Mr. Vieira worked at the Grand Hotel and spent his sparetime writing his magnum opus.

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Dancers Here Help Swell Fund to Battle Paralysis



SIGNAL EXPERTS CONVENE FRIDAY

Municipal Aids From Six States to Discuss Civic Problems.

Municipal electrical signal experts from six states will convene in Indianapolis Friday and Saturday for the annual Midwestern Section Meeting of the International Electrical Signal Association.

Mayor Reginald H. Sullivan is to deliver a welcoming address to the visiting municipal employees and department heads. Police Chief Michael Morrissey and Fire Chief Fred C. Kennedy, also are to speak at the opening session on Friday.

Problems of police communications system and other municipal electrical signal work will be discussed at the two-day meeting, which is to be held at the Hotel Severin.

Arrangements for the meeting are being made by John J. McNellis, head of the Indianapolis Gamewell Division, fire and police department signal system.

Following the business meeting scheduled for 11 a. m. Friday, members of the Association will hear an address by Leroy J. Keach, president of the Indianapolis Board of Safety.

Others who will speak at Friday's session are W. F. Qualls, superintendent of the electrical department at South Bend, and Clem Smith, Indiana Fire Marshal. Mr. Smith is to speak on "What It Means to Be Long to the I. M. S. A."

Fire Prevention Topic

Saturday's session will open at 10 a. m. with an address by G. A. Murray, police sales engineer, Western Electric Co. Mr. Murray is to speak on "Police Communications Systems."

The closing convention speech is to be delivered by J. W. Whittington, public relations committee, International Association of Electrical Inspectors. His topic is to be "Preventing Fires Through Electrical Safety." States to be represented at the meeting are Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

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