

## ARTIST AND MODEL

PHILOSOPHERS and thinkers and non-thinkers have for ages surrounded art with a nebulous haze — almost impenetrable to a normal intellect. Yet art gets so involved with life that while life of a sort may be lived without art, art cannot exist without life. One in the stream of life “ must take the current ” whether “ it serves ” or no. That current with its eddying and swirling produces strange, fantastic, confusing and, at times, almost unbearable patterns. Art appears and lifts the buffeted spirit out of the slough of life and endows it with godlike attributes. The body may continue to struggle and to suffer, the mind to falter; but, in spite of this, the will may take control. Then, amid all the confused and warring elements, the spirit will assert its divine prerogative of choice and, through contrast, harmony and co-ordination of selected elements, produce a pattern which reflects itself, and establishes itself, in the realm of the imagination superior to the material and the transitory. In this welter of circumstance the artist is born; the artist who does more than “ hold the mirror up to nature ”; who dissects

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nature and from the parts builds up a new nature, a new synthesis in which his freed spirit may disport itself.

Were it not that the artist will not remain under cover to enjoy himself to himself but needs must expose his product to others, the subject might be dropped right here. But there is the innocent bystander who has eyes, ears, feelings and occasionally intelligence, to be considered. He unwittingly or unwillingly may become involved — when willingly involved he ceases to be innocent and forfeits our sympathy. For the protection of this innocent party, that forewarned he may be forearmed, I attempt to disclose, in part at least, the nature of the artist. The artist need not necessarily be possessed of intellect. Intelligence? yes. Intellect? not necessarily! He uses certain faculties instinctively rather than intellectually. Now and again he is found with a trained and retentive memory which may supplement and, not infrequently, supplant the creative faculty. The prime factor of his spiritual equipment is imagination, that emotional mixing chamber in which he conjures up, sometimes vividly, more often dimly and hazily, the pattern or design which later he is to transfer to canvas or to writing pad. Into this chamber of the imagination the artist pours certain ingredients of human experience and reaction, selecting as may be proper those ingredients which

will induce a mood, arouse a passion or stimulate a desire; the mixture depending in each and every case on the effect he wishes to produce and the validity of his purpose. There must be always a purpose; indefinite or trivial sometimes it may seem, but without which the product falls short of art. Whatever comes into the mixing chamber, located in the abdomen, as some opine, or in the cranium as others will have it — which has not as yet been definitely established, though the emotional character of the product would seem to favor the abdominal theory — whatever enters this chamber of the imagination quite certainly travels along the sense channels of the physical body; which may well account for the morality or immorality, the sickly sentiment or the firm reason around which art, in itself unmoral, allows itself to play.

It must be understood that subject matter has intrinsically nothing to do with art. An obscene story or a lewd picture may or may not be a work of art; that depends solely on the selection or rejection of forms within the mixing chamber. An artist can as readily present purity in the forms of art as he can present impurity. Purity and decency can not wring a laugh out of the prurient minded. However, art does not exist to produce a laugh or cater to prurency; that potentiality lies in the subject matter alone. Only the moron can respond sympathetically

to the appeal of producers and managers to permit the publication of obscene books, the presentation in public of lewd and indecent pictures, on easel or screen, because forsooth they are deemed to be cast in the mold of art and the dear public should not be deprived of the beneficent ministration of art! In these cases there is no salutary purpose in the art that can compensate for the degrading effect of filth on animal minds, for the appeal is to the animal in the body; the body — that marvelous instrument through which alone can mind, spirit or will function. Indecency will not dwell in a body which its owner considers a temple of the god; which god is the owner himself made godlike through the exercise of his own will and capacity for happy selection.

Let us come back to the artist who was nearly lost in the discussion of his product. There has existed a mistaken notion that the artist must be what he paints, what he acts, what he writes; or, at least that all the potentialities residing in all he simulates or presents must reside in him. As to the first there is no discussion; as to the second, the same potentialities reside in the artist as reside in any normal man. In the process of creation the artist must free himself of personal emotionalisms except as he may stand outside himself and consciously study, in himself as in an outsider, reactions to his forms. "This is not real, it is merely simulation," he says to himself.

"But am I making it seem real to him, the outsider?" The Romeo of the stage makes ardent love to his Juliet. Does he have to feel the passion in order to portray it? No, indeed. His real self for the time is pent up and the audience sees only a counterfeited passion. He who really loves is dumb before his enamorata. The commercial artist does not necessarily have to be an imbecile in order to depict the half-witted smile or grin which he smears upon the countenances of the males who pour out the libations in the various beer and liquor advertisements and on the faces of the damsels who are about to receive the dose; though I must admit that it would not be difficult to convince one's self that the artist who produces the lewd cigarette advertisements appearing in supposedly first class magazines and on hoardings is a rake or libertine at heart.

Knowing the public, as I think I do, and being not without a certain cynicism in my attitude toward it, I can understand this spoofing on the part of the artist, for generally such it must be; but are not brewer and tobacco fabricator taking chances in permitting it? Or are they just part of the ingenuous public!

Again, knowing the artist, as I think I do, and his public, I have strong suspicion concerning much of the modernism in painting and architecture. I cannot say that I entertain strong convictions concerning

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this form of art, for the word conviction is too momentous in its connotations to permit of use in connection with so trivial a manifestation. The only emotional content in much of the stuff is that which makes the judicious grieve.

The artist, like the philosopher, takes his unimpassioned spirit to the serene heights of the mount of contemplation and from that point of vantage views the so-called passing scene. To him now, however, the scene is not passing for the expression of life is permanent as he views it from its source, an infinity of ages ago, to its latest ebullition. Within the picture are placid pools of thought set in plains of philosophical calm and self-restraint; rivers of action swirling among hills and vales of emotionalism and hysteria; and rugged and precipitous mountains where rage titanic battles of negation and belief. In one of the regions of emotional activity bordering on hysteria, he sees life in our own land taking its erratic course unconscious, seemingly, of the past; indifferent, in most part, to the future. He sees its dictators or directors, for it has no leaders, and unemotionally, calmly and without rancor takes up pen or brush.

Let me accompany my friend, the artist, up onto the mount of contemplation and look over his shoulder as he works. He sketches one thing after an-

other, as appears to meet his fancy; and I shall tell you what he is doing though I cannot reproduce it as calmly, dispassionately and with as sure a touch as he sets it down — nor shall I exert myself to do so. I may expose some of his and some of my own bent of opinion in the process of interpretation and explanation; but I shall leave it to my hearer to differentiate between the two if he cares. It seems strange, does it not, that, from all the infinity of what human experience past and present can offer us, we upon the Rock of Serenity should focus our gaze on feeble Washington, in the United States of America, in the year of our Lord — whatever that may have meant forty centuries ago — nineteen hundred and thirty-three. But so it is!

My friend, the artist, showed me the sketch pad on which he had been outlining in detail his impressions of a coded social system, and then he suddenly shifted his position. "This is interesting," said he stripping his pad, exposing a fresh sheet and casting his glance over toward the capitol dome beneath which and all about milled a crowd of human beings, looking and acting for all the world like an army of pismires groggy from external fumes or internal fury. The mass was given a certain unity by the percolating presence of numerous long black coats and

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broad-brimmed slouch hats which serve to distinguish, from the rest of the brood, the Southern politician. Plenty of Northern politicians were in evidence, too, but so individualistic in dress and bearing as not to affect definitely the general tone of the picture. Among the Northerners, democrats and republicans were to be distinguished; the republicans by a stiff, holy, self-righteous stand-offishness which has always marked their attitude toward the opposition. Senators and Congressmen of both parties mingled with the crowd and cast an unhealthy hue over the scene, for they are in the way of being pimples on the body politic, which come to a head sometimes in the halls of legislation but mostly in the pages of the Congressional Record. "Well! I should say this is interesting!" I echoed, and added, "but not as interesting as perhaps nauseating;" for from our point of vantage we could, as I have said, view life as a whole and clearly see the cause which was having its effect in the scene which was being enacted 'way down below us in the balmy, blossom-scented air of the Washington springtime. A sheet which had covered a shape on a pedestal had just been withdrawn and there stood the counterfeit presentment of one Robert E. Lee, traitor and rebel to some, the highest type of American manhood to others — others probably little versed in what constitutes Americanism or manhood. And the modern



day politician had placed the effigy up against the statue of Washington, "The Father of his Country;" an effrontery which only could have been exceeded by placing it next to the statue of the martyred Lincoln — Lincoln who had saved the country, which Washington had fathered, from destruction at the hands of the Rebel, Lee. Standing in proximity to the Washington that statue of Lee is a sad joke; in proximity to the Lincoln it would be an insufferable insult to the nation.

Shall we come down to earth for a close-up of this man placed in recent years upon this exalted pedestal by historian and politician alike? No, it were better to rest serene on our mount of contemplation where the air is not surcharged with the emotionalism which blurs images and distorts the real; where the whole human scene appears just as ridiculous and petty and pathetic as it really is. No, we can distinguish details from up here as well as we could down below in the sweltering mass and we can better relate one detail to another.

"Look!" said my friend, and we saw Lee on March 30, 1861, in the act of renewing his oath of allegiance upon accepting his commission of Colonel of Cavalry in the United States Army. "He well knows what his oath implies and whither it may lead him. Seven states had already seceded and were in arms. He soon would be called upon to

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fight against secession which he deplored and against the institution of slavery which he abhorred; at least deplored and abhorred as much as a weak and flaccid mind such as his could be made to entertain a real passion."

"How do you know," said I, "that Lee was antagonistic to slavery or to secession? His acts didn't seem to indicate it." "Well, this from a letter of his of January 23, 1861, to his son and this from one of December 27, 1856, to Mrs. Lee; " and he put his fingertip upon these two passages — first: "Secession is nothing but Revolution. The framers of our constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom and forbearance in its formation, and surrounded it by so many guards and securities, if it was intended to be broken by every member of the Confederacy at will. It is intended for 'perpetual union' so expressed in the preamble and the establishment of a Government, not a compact, which can only be dissolved by revolution or the consent of all the people in convention assembled," and — second: "In this enlightened age there are few, I believe, but will acknowledge that slavery as an institution is a moral and political evil in any country."

"Those," continued my friend, "were his expressed sentiments. But Lee never sewed himself up tight. He always left a loop-hole through which his shifty nature could escape. As for instance, he

ends his letter of January 23 with this statement: 'If the Union is dissolved and the Government dispersed, I shall return to my native state and share the miseries of my people and save in defense will draw my sword no more.' Lee liked the flabby sentiment embodied in that last phrase and nearly wore it threadbare. 'Except under such conditions or in such circumstances I will draw my sword no more,' he wrote again and again.

"Let us follow his course a bit farther," said my friend, the artist, "and then draw our own conclusions as to the nobility and integrity of Lee's essential nature. On March 15, 1861, that is, fifteen days before he, tongue in cheek, had renewed his oath of allegiance to the United States, Lee was appointed to a commission in the Rebel army, to the highest military command in the gift of the Confederacy. On April 20, less than three weeks after renewing his oath of allegiance, Lee sent in his resignation from the United States Army in order to accept the Confederate appointment. On April 23, with some ceremony, Lee accepted the supreme command of the forces of Virginia, just one month to a day before the Virginia Convention's proposal to secede could legally have been submitted to the people of the State for ratification or otherwise. Therefore, the 'noble Lee' could not have followed Virginia out of the Union, could not have drawn an unstained

sword in defense of his native state, for his state (forced out of the Union rather than going of its own motion) was not being attacked.

"In going over to the Confederacy Lee was putting into effect a design which had matured in his mind while still a Brigadier General of cavalry in the United States Army in San Antonio, Texas, before being recalled to Washington to be elevated in command. Therefore, you and I, even in the serenity of these calm heights, have a distinct right and perhaps a duty to call him traitor, while his actions proclaim him rebel.

"The unregenerate South," my friend continued, "calls the War of the Rebellion 'the war between the states' but not so one who knows the background of the Rebellion. As all the acts, legislative and otherwise, of the Confederacy show the war on its side to have been solely a war to preserve the institution of slavery, to fasten irrevocably the chains of human bondage, no man who, like Lee, gave himself heart and soul (if Lee had a soul) to the cause of slavery can even by any mistaken notion of decency be called 'noble.' No man who, like Lee, gave the enemy good reason to believe him sympathetic to its cause, and open to offers, while at the time maintaining status in the United States Army, can by any stretch of even a distorted imagination be called a loyal American. Wishywashy historians and politi-

cians of the North and prejudiced historians of a recalcitrant South may try, with buckets of whitewash, to make Lee noble and loyal; but his spirit will forever remain in essence disloyal and ignoble."

My friend had laid in these lines with the extremes of calmness and dispassion, and I wondered if anything could break in on the serenity of his spirit. As for me, I confess I found myself moved. I could see why, for reasons to be advanced later, certain elements in the North and certain others in the South should want to elevate Lee to a high pedestal, but why should anyone, especially a Northern historian, or any true historian, seek, as has been and is being done, deliberately to defame and besmirch loyal Union soldiers and officers in the attempt to elevate Lee.

You have been told in this Club, in a sympathetic study of Lee, of the atrocities committed by the Union soldiers, especially on Sherman's March to the Sea; of the firing of barns and fine old mansions out of pure wantonness. Our essayist told quite gleefully how his parents had run all the stock to the swamps and had hidden it till the loyal — only he did not call it loyal — army had passed. He gave the impression that the parental mansion had been burned.

Well, if it wasn't burned it should have been, for those animals were contraband under every usage

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of war. He knew, as you know, that the invading army was there to save the Union from destruction by those who wilfully, deliberately and in malice had fired the first shots and had taken loyal lives. The homes of the rebels might well have been burned, but they were not by Union men except as punishment in some extreme case. Go into Virginia today, and farther South, and follow the course of Sherman's March and among the things you will see, and which are advertised to be seen, are the fine old ante-bellum mansions the sight of which will be expected to awaken your uncouth Northern hearts to the charm and romance of a social order which blossomed and could flourish only in the sweet-scented soil of human slavery.

I have said that there are reasons why certain in our land wish to elevate Lee. I can touch on but a few of these and characterize but a few of the instigators. Those were not disinterested or uninterested congressmen and senators whom we saw hobnobbing with the politicians of both sections, North and South, in that huddle of pismires around the Capitol on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Lee last Spring (1933). Republican politicians, indeed, were the prime offenders. It started with Taft but showed itself most virulently in the Coolidge administration. Coolidge, you know, upon

signing a bill authorizing the minting of the so-called traitor coin to help finance the Stone Mountain project, pusillanimously permitted himself to be photographed between two Confederate flags with no evidence of the National emblem in sight; and G. O. Partisan legislators listened with approval to the harangues of a rebel senator who, in his effort to glorify the Confederacy, besmirched the Union and vilified its leaders in the Civil War — all this self-abasement in order to curry favor with, hoping to break the ranks of, the solid, the unreconstructed South!

“But,” chides a timid voice, “those are harsh words — rebel and unreconstructed! The South today is loyal; it acknowledges but one flag, the stars and stripes.” One flag! “Oh, yeah,” answers my friend, “no flag, rather! ”

TIME, the news magazine, in reporting the launching of the dirigible Macon in Akron, Ohio, stated that “a delegation from Macon, Ga., waved flags.” John L. Morris, Manager, Chamber of Commerce of Macon wrote in correction — “No flags were waved. Proud of the distinction of having the world’s largest dirigible named after their home city, yes; but no flagwavers are Maconians.” This in TIME’S letters July 25, 1932 — while on June 13 of the same year one Thomas F. Little of

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Chattanooga, Tenn., had wound up his letter to TIME with these words: "There are legions of these Yankees (Yanks, i.e., World War Soldiers) in the South today, native sons, proud of their heritage, regretting nothing which their forefathers did, convinced that they were right through and through and who would take up tomorrow where they left off if there was a sufficient cause but who fully realize that the true United States lay not to the North but to the South and with this responsibility upon them would fight all over again to preserve the Union."

Which means, if it means anything, that this "little" man, along with legions of others, would fight tomorrow to preserve that Union which lay to the South and which harbored and was based upon the institution of slavery; not based, mind you, on the doctrine of State's rights, which the Constitution of the Confederacy does not mention nor deem to exist, but solely upon the institution of slavery. This "little" man would fight tomorrow to maintain slavery if the issue could be joined! The Republican party under Coolidge degraded itself in a futile attempt to get the political goodwill of such as these. It is these and their ilk who initiated the Stone Mountain project; Stone Mountain which vitiates the pure air of heaven by forcing it to blow across the graven images of three archtraitors.

An Illinois Governor, a Republican, let his name



be placed upon the Stone Mountain directorate. In a speech before the Daughters of the Confederacy in Convention assembled at Savannah, Georgia, in 1924 that Governor had this to say: "When I visit Richmond and gaze upon the statue of Robert E. Lee, that masterpiece of art, I like to think that the knightly figure there portrayed was a countryman of mine, and that I have a small part in the immortal fame that has come to him."

You don't blame my artist friend for laughing and remarking: "as for me, the smaller the part the more gratifying;" and, he continued, "just to think! that speech is embalmed in the Congressional Record." (February 6, 1925.) That Governor, too, has allowed himself to be quoted as follows: "Standing here in front of the mountain, gazing up at the mighty wall of granite, picturing in my mind the colossal figures of Davis, Lee and Jackson, which are taking form, I felt a great thrill of pride that these men, whose portraits in stone will endure as long as the earth endures, were Americans."

Americans! forsooth! If a politician must stoop to getting votes for self or party, kissing dirty-faced babies were preferable to such prostitution as the above.

But snobs as well as politicians have played their part in the elevation of Lee to the post of the great American. The wife of a Republican Senator of

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New Hampshire lobbied to put through the bill rehabilitating the Lee mansion, so called, at Arlington, and dedicating it to the memory of Lee, who cared so little for it that he swore that he never would return to it as it had been so defiled by the mere presence of the Union soldiers who had protected it from harm during the period of the war.

Our present Minister to Germany in his capacity of historian wrote — "Robert E. Lee, master of Arlington, heir of the Father of his Country, Mary Custis, his invalid wife, cast out of the home of her ancestors; Robert E. Lee, trying then to set free the slaves of the Mount Vernon estate." And here my artist friend quoted a footnote in a great work called "The Reward of Patriotism" by Lucy Shelton Stewart, daughter of a Union general. Parenthetically I wish every loyal American or American of any stripe would read this book! The note reads: "These statements of Professor Dodd are of singular interest, since Lee was not the master of Arlington nor the heir of the Father of his Country, because his father-in-law entailed the property upon his grandson so that Lee never owned any of it. Nor was Mrs. Lee cast out of her home. Lee set the slaves free because his father-in-law's will directed that they be freed. These truths are shown in the Lee biographies by his son and nephew."

There could be no possible objection to the Gov-

ernment's acquiring Arlington as a National Museum and as a monument to a not as yet dead past; but only snobs or rebel sympathizers could wish it to be made a monument to Lee, who is presented as heir to the Father of his Country in the hope, perhaps, of giving dignity to their own self-imposed low estate. For such as these the home of a descendant of the great Washington (which you know it was not) must be preserved for the ages in its pristine purity (which is impossible for Lee's name is attached to it!). But it pleases the climbers to be linked with Washington even through the slight channel of a house which had once been owned by the great-granddaughter of the widow Custis who became Washington's wife.

But what a depth of insult in thus exalting Lee do these petty politicians and self-seekers heap upon those Virginians who were loyal to the Union, upon such men as Generals Winfield Scott and George H. Thomas, both loyal Virginians who could be and were loyal to the greater cause.

"Do not think," said my friend, "that in offering my strictures I forget that many, many, indeed a respectable minority of those living South of Mason and Dixon's line, including Mrs. Robert E. Lee, herself, favored the preservation of the Union and were antagonistic to the institution of slavery, for that was the fact; while many were made to suffer

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for their loyalty throughout the period of the ' slave-holders' Rebellion ' and even later — perhaps until this day."

I watched my friend, the artist, as he sketched in another detail or two with firm and well directed stroke. Then he said with what sounded like a sigh: " It's funny — " I interrupted: " Funny is a funny word in this connection! "

" Yes," he returned, " I am using the word merely as a synonym for amusing, amazing, disgusting, incredible, depending upon the user's state of mind. Yes, it's funny where this mawkish, old womanish sentimentality, which says ' let bygones be bygones ' regardless of right and honor and decency and which sends flowers to the perpetrators of fiendish murders, will crop out. Now you would hardly expect it to appear in a callous, hard-headed bunch like the American Bar Association, an arm of the judicial branch of our Government, whose function supposedly is to further the cause of right and justice, but whose chief interest seems centered in technicalities." " Come now," I interposed, " isn't that a bit tough on the bar! " " By their works ye shall know them," he said, " and judge them." Then he continued, " The Atlanta Journal of March 11, 1924, begins an editorial thusly: ' Time is the great vindicator of right because it is the great clarifier. Forty years ago one hardly could have imagined the Citizenship

Committee of the American Bar Association preparing and publishing with the approval of that broadly representative body, a tribute to Robert E. Lee.'

"The tribute referred to, published in the interest of good citizenship," my friend went on to explain, "was entitled 'Washington, Lee and Lincoln, the great triumvirate among the makers of America.' You see Lee is given precedence over Lincoln in this American Bar Association document which continues: 'He (Lee) too, was a great American patriot. And as years go by and only the more prominent figures among the makers of America stand out in retrospect, we shall find that not one of them — no, not one — offers to this and future generations a more priceless example of duty to country as he saw it than is found in the high-souled, finely poised character, the model Christian gentleman, the soul of gentility and honor, Robert E. Lee.'"

"My gawd! " Each looked to see if the other had uttered the ejaculation. Neither had. It was the cry of the great soul of patriotism and decency and honor reverberating in the circumambient air.

"As he saw it! " A vicious term used by sickly sentimentalists and barristers in extenuation of any crime they may wish to condone. Christian gentleman! We realized at once why the term had become so obnoxious even in modern Germany! The Committee of the American Bar Association, headed

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by Elihu Root of New York, which had put forth this document, was composed of Root, three "yes men," one each from Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Kansas, and a chairman, one R. E. L. Saner of Texas. When you consider the State and what the initials, R. E. L., of its representative might and probably did signify, you can see how the superannuated Root and the little "yes men" from the provinces had had it put over on them!

There my friend, the artist, stripped his pad and exposed a clean sheet which, however, he left untouched. Then, suddenly packing his kit, he said: "Let's get away from the City of Washington with its self-seeking, its intrigues, its personal and political bickerings, its little Mussolinis and Hitlers and Stalins who never will or can grow up to life size for they will wilt and shrivel up in the vital airs which blow across a wide country which the Fates have dedicated to the cause of political and personal liberty.

"There you are," he said, "just one thing after another! That makes life — and makes it interesting."