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SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 1935.

The Government's Credit

THE failure of the Federal Government's offering of $100,000,000 worth of four-year fully guaranteed 1 1-2 per cent bonds should not be interpreted as signifying a lack of confidence in the credit of the Government, despite the fact that it is the first such failure in history.

Even hostile critics of the Administration's spending policy see no reason to believe that such an interpretation can fairly be placed upon the unwillingness of the bond dealers and banks to take more than $85,000,000 of the issue. The result is felt by them to be a reflection of the resentment of the bankers and investment houses against the auction system of selling the bonds, rather than as a manifestation of declining confidence.

Under the auction system, the bond houses and banks say they cannot make a fair profit. At the same time, the public is virtually excluded, since bids are not taken except on very large blocks of bonds. Consequently small purchasers are frozen out of the market.

Another explanation for the failure of the recent issue may be that the market is pretty well saturated with long term bonds, and that purchasers are now looking for short term offerings. Some bond houses feel that the market must be stimulated by short term issues.

MR. MORGENTHAU denies that the auction system of selling the bonds is responsible for the failure of the issue, but he offers no substitute explanation. At any rate it may safely be said that the explanation lies elsewhere than in a lack of faith in the credit of the Government. Continued spending of billions for relief, without the raising of corresponding amounts through taxation, will impair that credit, but certainly it has not been impaired as yet.

Hitler's Strong Position

AS THE powers cudgel their brains for a course of action which will stop MUSSOLINI'S incursion into Africa, as they seek frantically for some formula or incantation which will salvage the prestige of the League of Nations, in the event *Il Duce* refuses to be sidetracked, there is one European leader who must be looking on with a sardonic gleam in his eye. That man is the German *Fuehrer*.

He stands to gain from the confusion into which European alignments have been thrown by the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. He will profit from the animosities engendered among Britain, France and Italy, if they split over the Ethiopian problem, or from the weakening of Italy through years of African fighting, in the event the "Stresa front" is maintained, and MUSSOLINI goes ahead with his expedition.

Should the miracle happen, should France and England and other league members actually carry out sanctions against Italy, there is reason to believe that again HITLER would be the gainer. It was recently reported in Paris, and now it is confirmed in the Italian *Informazione*, hitherto a reliable journal, that *Il Duce* has offered *Der Fuehrer* a military alliance, a 10-year, non-aggression pact, and a common offensive against the "democratic" nations of Europe, in the event the League of Nations applies sanctions and prevents Italy from invading Ethiopia.

This alliance probably will not be formed, for the reason that hardly anybody thinks sanctions will be applied. But even so, it is easy to see that Italy will be less able to block Germany's designs in Austria while engaged in a long, expensive and bloody struggle in Africa. The Reich will be growing stronger and stronger during the period when Italy probably will be willing under the strain, if indeed she survives it. A defeat for Italy would be a piece of good luck for the Nazis, of course, since that would leave France, Britain and Russia as the only potential combinations of world powers capable of blocking their *Drang nach Osten*.

Thus it may be seen that whereas a bare six months ago the question was being asked whether the Reich's foreign policy had not led her into a *cul de sac*, with Germany ringed about by an overwhelmingly strong coalition of hostile powers, today the scene has shifted, and France is perhaps as dangerous a situation as Germany. We said at the time that such coalitions as the one then forming against the Reich have a strong tendency to disintegrate, and that such a result might almost certainly be anticipated with respect to the ring then forming around the Nazis. That prophecy is being fulfilled sooner than we anticipated.

Charity at Its Best

IT WAS announced yesterday by the board that the Sheltering Arms Hospital is in dire need of financial aid. To meet the problem of diminishing funds, the number of beds in the institution has been reduced from 80 to 50. On the accepted list, awaiting admission to the hospital for operations or medical treatment, are 127 persons. However, no succor can be given any of them until facilities are enlarged. Only in a case of life or death can additional patients be admitted.

This is a situation which should appeal to the generosity of all Virginians. The Sheltering Arms is strictly a charitable hospital. No one is admitted who can afford to pay for surgical or medical care. The hospital is operated solely for the benefit of persons who cannot afford to pay doctors' bills.

MRS. RAMON D. GARCIN, president of the board, states that donations have been fewer and less substantial during the past few months than they have for many years. The depression has struck with pathetic effectiveness at a vital point. This hospital plays one of the most important roles in community life. It will gladly accept from the charitably minded either money or supplies. These will be gladly given by those who can afford it.

Withering Hand

THE alacrity with which the men upon whom WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST placed the hand of political benediction have renounced any intention of joining him in a "constitutional Democratic" movement, must be disconcerting to the California publisher.

GOVERNOR TALMADGE, whose imprecations against the President have been only a little less in bad taste than HUEY LONG'S, hurriedly announced that while he was going into physical training for a convention fight against the renomination of ROOSEVELT, he had no idea of bolting the party. LEWIS DOUGLAS, who resigned as director of the budget because of disagreement with the President, and has been expressing his dissent in vigorous terms in the magazines, said he "wouldn't even consider" nomination on either end of a "constitutional" ticket.

SENATOR BYRD, usually mild in his utterances, characterized the HEARST suggestion that he was acceptable as a candidate on a third party ticket as "absurd." Of those mentioned, only AL SMITH and GOVERNOR RITCHIE have not publicly disavowed Mr. HEARST, and anybody familiar with their political records will know that they have done so, publicly or not. AL SMITH might carry on a nasty fight inside the Democratic party, but the man who swallowed so many personally objectionable Tammany nominations in New York politics, and remained loyal to Tammany, will certainly not leave the party because it renominates the President.

Although he had no intention of doing so, MR. HEARST actually did the President a favor with his statement. Besides drawing declarations from three "potential" candidates that entirely eliminates them, he has put the blight of his withering hand upon an intraparty movement. No matter how anxious certain elements within the Democratic party might be to defeat the renomination of the President, there will be few persons in the party who will throw their hats into the air over the prospect of joining a movement sponsored by Mr. HEARST. In fact, such a movement could not have much less favorable auspices.

The Blame for Lynchings

IT HAS been customary in the South from the very inception of one of its blackest evils to lay the blame for every lynching at the feet of the "poor whites." They are the people with brutal instincts and disregard for the orderly processes of law. The "best people" of the community not only hold themselves sternly aloof from lynchings but hate them with all the ardor of their souls.

Writing in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, W. J. CASH deplores this practice of apology and urges that one of the gravest social problems which faces the South be met in a spirit of realism. And, to this end, he sees a hopeful sign in developments which followed the recent lynching of a crazy Negro in Franklin County, North Carolina. The victim was taken by 25 unmasked men in broad daylight from the sheriff and five of his deputies. At the resulting inquiry these officers were of no help in the effort to place responsibility for the crime. They could not recall the makes of the automobiles used by the mob, nor could they say whether the cars carried license plates. Thus this investigation ended in the same manner as the one which followed the more widely heralded lynching in Georgia of Lee M. FRANK 20 years ago. Thus ends virtually every such inquiry.

The hopeful sign which MR. CASH sees in this unfortunate affair in North Carolina is that there was no apology on the part of the leading newspapers of the State. They did not lay it at the feet of the "poor whites," but took the realistic view that the "good people," too, must share the shame of the mob murder. The ultra-conservative Charlotte *Observer* struck out fiercely in a series of editorials. Moreover, it printed a signed editorial article by a member of its staff in which he made some very blunt assertions and challenged the people of North Carolina to face the issue squarely.

It is doubtful if many of the so-called "best people" actually participate in the barbarous business of lynching. There are convincing indications, however, that they, or some of them, condone what is being done. In this attitude they become parties to the crime. Sheriffs and their deputies would hardly "go blind" on such occasions if they did not know they were doing the safe thing. These men are shrewd appraisers of community opinion. In the interest of their own political hides, they are likely to steer a popular course.

But the "best people" of the South can stamp out lynching if it is their will so to do. At the polls and in the courts they can hold recreant officers and guilty mobsters to strict accountability for their acts. This they have not been doing as a body. This they can do if they are to retain the good opinion of the world.

Emancipation for Males

WHEN the proud and wet Maryland Free State turned down its handsome, Virginia-born Governor, ALBERT C. RITCHIE, last November, and elevated in his place a Methodist minister's son who reads the Bible through once a year, we began wondering what had happened to the libertarianism of that Commonwealth.

Then along came the teachers' oath bill. It looked for a time as if the witch-hunters and patriotbeats would succeed in putting this atrocity on the statute books, and we expected any minute to see HENRY MENCKEN renounce his citizenship and move to some more civilized State where he would be out of the reach of the wowsers and the *Polizei*.

But finally GOVERNOR NICE, after due cogitation, vetoed the teachers' oath bill. That helped to rehabilitate the Free State in our eyes. And now something else has happened to make us feel that Maryland is indeed on the comeback trail. They are placing a wife-calling contest in Baltimore! We had heard of hog-calling contests and husband-calling contests, but we had given up all thought of ever reading about a wife-calling contest. Maybe it was our incurable inferiority complex as a male that caused us to view the possibility as hopeless. But now Maryland has led the way. The imperious command of husbands calling their wives is being heard at the Boost Brooklyn Celebration in Baltimore this week, and the spell of centuries of inferiority is being cast off as it were overnight. The news will be as a battle call to downtrodden husbands everywhere. It should provide them with the intestinal fortitude to face rolling pins, flatirons and other weapons heretofore devastating effectives in the hands of their lords and masters. Like ROLAND'S horn at Roncesvalles, the wife-calling contest in Baltimore is a clarion to males throughout the land to assert themselves. The Free State deserves its sobriquet after all.

The Once Over

EXAMINATION FOR RADIO STUDENTS

("Training for the profession of radio broadcasting is now a course at the University of Michigan."—News item.)

(1) Write an essay not to exceed 150 words on the influence of popular dentrifices on the American art, music and literature. Include your opinion on the part played by having cream manufacturers in the development of American humor.

(2) Which of the following men do you think has had the greatest educational influence on the young?

Nicholas Murray Butler.
Joe Penner.
Will Durant.
Jack Pearl.
Walter Lippmann.

(3) Name the authors of the following famous phrases or exclamations within the time limit specified after each:

"Yowsir!" (Two seconds.)

"Damn the torpedoes, go ahead!" (Two hours.)

"Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute." (One-half day.)

"Wanna buy a duck?" (One-half minute.)

"If that be treason, make the most of it!" (Three hours.)

"Vas you dere, Sharlie?" (Three seconds.)

(4) Rate in the order of their importance in their influence on the American home the following noted persons:

George Washington.
Ed Wynn.
Lowell of Harvard.
Vallee of Yale.
Roosevelt and Garner.
Amos and Andy.
Ethel Barrymore.
Gracie Allen.
Franklin D. Roosevelt.
Fred Allen.

(5) Write a 200-word treatise on the advantages of the hillbilly craze in giving employment to entertainers who have never been south of Fourteenth Street, New York City, in their entertainment careers, and state which instrument you think the American public is more familiar with, the grand piano or the musical saw.

(6) State whether you believe Ed Wynn has been greatly benefited in prestige by his affiliation with a well-known brand of gasoline, or whether you think the gasoline has been greatly benefited by the affiliation with Wynn.

(7) Study the following titles and see if you can correctly identify the persons associated with them within the time prescribed:

The Father of His Country. (Ten minutes.)
The Fire Chief. (One second.)
The Great Emancipator. (15 minutes.)
The Old Maestro. (15 seconds.)

ITINERANT

Some find their heart
On a Capri isle;
Oh, Cupid's dart
Goes many a mile.

Some find amorous,
Ardent yen
In a clamorous
Five-and-ten.

In little gypsy
Tea rooms, few,
Becoming tipsy,
Strange maids woo.

Many the places where
Cupid struts—
When a writer of modern
Songs guesses nuts!

—Sam Michael Gevins.

It looks as if the big munitions salesman is in for a tough winter and might wind up writing sentimental verse for the holiday greeting cards.

F. W. C. insists that, after a trip over the country and a careful review of the American scene, he thinks the buggy days are back.

GENU-(RE)-FLECTIONS

When a man picks on some one his own size, he often becomes extremely modest in his own estimation of himself.

Poverty is a point of view; wealth is a view with alarm.

Introspection is like peeking through the keyhole at a directors' meeting: the room is too full of smoke to see anything.

H. I. PHILLIPS.

Twenty Years Ago Today

THE WAVY-LOCKED philosopher of Capitol Square, Frank Smith, yesterday announced his candidacy for Governor on a single-tax platform. He announced a willingness to enter the Democratic primary if the "professional politicians" would permit it, but, if they interposed obstacles, he would run as an independent in the general election.

PROFESSOR E. E. SMITH, superintendent of the South Richmond schools, said yesterday he expected to occupy the new Bainbridge Street School on October 10. The building will be thoroughly modern and fireproof.

TIDEWATER LABOR UNIONS are solidly behind James B. Doherty in his candidacy for reappointment as commissioner of labor, according to J. B. Clinedinst, an attache of the bureau.

TODAY IS THE DAY "when a fella needs a frien'". It is moving day in Richmond, and the public utilities, the postmen and the bill collectors are in for trouble during the readjustment period.

As It Appears to The Cavalier

WE AMERICANS are a fickle people. The man whom we elevate to high office with great majorities and joyous acclaim we often dismiss with hissing and contumely. In American politics, nothing succeeds but success. The party in power is held strictly accountable for all the misadventures which occur during its incumbency, including unfavorable weather and falling prices.

—

Secession destroyed the Democratic party in 1860, and from that time until the election of Grover Cleveland it was under a cloud, its name a by-word and a hissing. After two terms for that splendid Democrat, Mr. Cleveland, the Democratic party did not come into power again until the election of Mr. Wilson. He was returned to office by a very narrow margin on the credit of having kept us out of war.

—

Wilson led an unwilling people into a most unpopular war, and when the electorate had another chance to express itself at the end of his term, it returned the Republican party to power with an unprecedented majority. Along came prosperity, and the Republican party claimed it as its child, and, while it lasted, the Republican party was invincible.

—

Along came the depression, and the myth that the Republican party was appointed by Zeus to be the custodian of prosperity was completely exploded. After floundering and flapping futilely like a stranded whale, Mr. Hoover succumbed to the glamorous Mr. Roosevelt. Many politicians, with no particular merit, rode into Congress on that tidal wave, and their success in so riding has excited many others.

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It is too early to predict with any safety what is in the lap of the gods for 1936. If the people believe that Roosevelt has succeeded in vanquishing the depression, and that happy days are here again, he will ride into power again and with him many political hitch-hikers. Already these are lining the highways with their thumbs pointing toward Washington.

—

For these political thumbers, it will be just too bad if anything happens to ditch the Roosevelt car. It is entirely possible that 1936 will find the people not a little dubious of the plan of salvation provided by the professors. Relief by economic anthropophagism may have palled on us by that time. The devouring of the rich by the poor may by that time have reached the point where the devoured outnumber the devourers. Relief is obliged to reach into more and more pockets every day.

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The breadlines of relief are not growing shorter. There are, as yet, no satisfactory signs that the business of relief is being taken over by recovery. The National Government is still in the red, still appropriating more money than its income, still increasing the national deficit, still reaching out for further sources of taxation. The majority of Americans may believe that this is wise and right, and, if they do, then Roosevelt will again be elected President, and those who are waiting to ride into office on that victory will be successful.

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On the other hand, it is entirely possible that by the fall of 1936 the Americans will be weary of postponing by borrowing this gaudy relief which leads us to the inevitable hour when we must live within our income and practice that economy and retrenchment which has been indicated in our case since the beginning of our malady.

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So far as I know, Mr. Wilson was the first appearance of the pedagogue in politics in this land. His first term was rather dull, and had not the European war come on, and furnished him with the issue of keeping us out of the war sacrifice, it is highly probable that he would have fallen before the uninteresting Mr. Hughes.

—

During the war, Mr. Wilson became the personification of America at war, and was, for the duration of the conflict after we entered it, quite a national hero and there were some who acclaimed him the greatest President since Washington. That sounds rather funny now, but, up to the day when Wilson set sail for Versailles, it is perfectly true that America regarded him as the genius of victory, the man who had saved the world for democracy and rescued it from the rule of German militarism.

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In its first opportunity to express themselves after the end of the Wilson rule, the American people shoved by an overwhelming majority how much they were opposed to any further participation of America in European intrigue. All that Wilson stood for was swept as so much rubbish into the void. We elected the genial and accommodating Mr. Harding, who looked on the presidency as a pleasant junket.

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He was succeeded by the austere and impeccably proper Mr. Coolidge, under whose leadership he attained to the very pinnacle of paper prosperity. The sagacious little man saw this card castle tottering and declared that he "did not choose to run."

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Along came Hoover, the plumed knight of militant Protestantism, and prosperity being still with us and under the aegis of the Republican party, he routed the Pope's undercover man, Mr. Smith, and all was merry as a marriage bell.

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The pontiff of prosperity had hardly gotten warm in his seat before the Coolidge paper prosperity collapsed and left him in a slough from which he never had the contrivance to recover. He continued to predict better days, and to talk in an impotent but oracular way, until the people had a chance at him and gave him the gate.

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Mr. Roosevelt arrived in what seemed the nick o' time. He closed the banks to keep the customers from closing them. He began a very vigorous and rigorous rear-guard warfare with the depression.

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The pedagogue, who made his first appearance with the martyred Mr. Wilson, was now summoned from his academic cloisters and set to make over the American world. He has sought to mend many inventions, and certainly we have been sailing uncharted seas, and it is just possible that, before 1936, we shall make the land-fall of the New Deal Beulah. If we do, all will be well with the Pib, Dis. If not, the would-be Roosevelt hitch-hikers will be left on the highway.

THOMAS LOMAX HUNTER.

Reports of My Death Are Not Greatly Exaggerated

—Washington Post.

Voice of the People

Bergdoll's Case

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—A shrine to be built on the Skyline Drive! Why? Does not the latter, in all its parts, constitute an imperishable shrine?

Stand on one of its heights—just below your feet is a cloud, the sun shining brightly upon it. You know the dark shadow that lies upon the earth below; you go on and stand upon a rock that juts out over the cliff, where the eagle built its nest, and watch the cloud rise and slowly unveil the Valley of Virginia; you go on and on and look across from the Blue Ridge to her great sisters, the Alleghanies, which keep pace with her as side by side they walk the continent together; between them in the valley is the Daughter of the Stars, the sun glinting her waters as they ceaselessly flow to add their tribute to the ocean's vastness; turning, you look out over the broken spires of mountains, the sloping hills and wooded vales of picturesque and beautiful Piedmont, as it stretches toward the rising sun. Here and there throughout that landscape are the homes where once lived

"The great men gone forever and ever by,
Who could rule and dare not lie,"

men of minds great enough to grasp the eternal principles of truth, justice and the rights of man, on which they founded this republic.

All this adds the spiritual in man; if it cannot lift his soul from Nature up to Nature's God, can it be done by a paltry building made by feeble mortal hands and soon to crumble into dust? It seems that it would rather distract the worshiper from this mighty, everlasting shrine, made by God himself.

SAMUEL B. WOODS.

Charlottesville.

The Tuskegee Article

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—Please allow me to comment on your splendid article that dealt with the school at Tuskegee.

I am the mother of six growing boys. I feel that they should be educated, so that we can solve perplexing problems to confront the young men and women. I am glad a building is being erected to show the spirit of neighborliness.

Personally, I have always loved the Southland, which has always been my home. I like the Biblical meaning of neighbor. I love those who strive to do good, regardless of whether they be white or black.

I have a son who is a student at Tuskegee. The Christian mother teaches her children by precepts and example. As the boy grows older, he is taught the sanctity of the white woman, the Negro woman and, above all, the sanctity of one's self.

My grandparents were slaves. My maternal grandmother had a mistress who was a real Christian. She encouraged her slaves to live clean, moral lives. This good lady lived in Rockbridge County. These good things have been handed down, not only to me, but to others. Had there not been such characters, God would have destroyed a creation. Other slaves who were not thus fortunate have learned to live and do right. There are problems in all races.

CHRISTINE BROADY.

Lowmoor.

Young Politicians Start Irvin Cobb To Philosophizing

BY IRVIN S. COBB

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZ., Aug. 30.—Youth will be served. The only trouble with this generation is that so often it insists on being served raw. But it's fine when the youngsters take interest in their Government.

Last week, the young Democrats met at Milwaukee and pointed with pride, and today I read where the young Republicans are fixing to gather in Iowa and view with alarm.

Sometimes you find a "younger element" is merely a veteran political hack who's had his face lifted, but there's hope for the country if the adolescent saplings and the budded sproutlets thicken in the political hothouse, though, of course, both parties will continue to keep a few dependable specimens of the old stock for grafting purposes.

(Copyright, 1935.)

The Future of Railroads

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—I have heard many people discuss the railroad question, and their contention was that the railroad was doomed. I said not, and when I went through "The Rebel" at Broad Street Station, seeing the beauty of such a modern train, I was convinced that the railroad was not doomed, but was only beginning its real service to the people.

My dream of the future of the R., F. & P. is that there will be a four-track road between Richmond and Washington, two for freight service and two for modern trips of "The Rebel," and there will be a daily service with a schedule, one train leaving Richmond every three hours, making local stops, one from Washington on the same schedule, and a fare at the rate of $1.50 each way.

If the public is granted such a schedule there would be a boulevard of homes paralleling the road from Richmond to Washington. I have ridden on and inspected most all land transportation of today, and in my judgment "The Rebel" trip is the best in every respect.

V. M. DAVIS.

Richmond.

"Rogers Memorial Village"

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—On the morning that the news of the death of Will Rogers came to us his morning message in the paper had been one of friendly concern over the plight of the "spinach pioneers" in Alaska. He especially called attention to the need of adequate housing being promptly supplied. The thought that occurred to me, after hearing of his death, was that, if every one who felt sorrow at his passing should contribute even so small a sum as 10 cents each, enough could be raised to construct a village of comfortable and substantial homes, with a community center buildings, and that this village should be called the Rogers Memorial Village.

I thought of writing to The Times-Dispatch, suggesting that they sponsor the collecting of a fund for such a purpose, but hesitated, for fear of interfering with some possible memorial that would affect a larger group than these Alaskan pioneers. So far, I have seen no memorial suggested other than a bronze tablet. I am sure that Will would prefer the village.

Of course, it may be that Will's last letter has inspired a bettering of the condition of these pioneers through other agencies. You are in a better position to be informed about this than I am.

I merely send this suggestion for your consideration.

MARY DUKE.

Charlottesville.

Letters for the Voice of the People should be held to 200 words. The editor reserves the right to trim communications, preserving the essential thought. Unless accompanied by adequate postage unused letters will not be returned. Every letter must be accompanied by the name of the sender, and no letter criticizing an individual, organization or institution will be published, except over the author's signature.

Stumblingblocks for Il Duce

Grumbling in Italy

[The Living Age]

Although the respectable press of Europe and America prints little information to that effect, Italy is probably facing a more serious crisis than any other nation in Europe at the moment. The restrictions placed on foreign exchange at the end of 1934 served warning, and Mussolini's subsequent preparations for war on Abyssinia suggest that only a war—and a very risky war, at that—may be able to overcome a rising wave of popular unrest.

But, doubtful as the outcome of an Abyssinian campaign may be, fulminations on this subject do not step on any important toes, and the world has not been unduly disturbed by the Duce's excited speeches on the subject. What caused far greater concern was his criticism of the English, especially in view of the fact that Italy's very existence lies at the mercy of the British Mediterranean fleet. That Mussolini has finally dared to offend the most powerful nation on earth is the surest sign that something is rotten in the state. In the light of these observations, the following report of the United Anti-Fascist Committee in Paris, based on information received from Milan, possesses far greater importance than the usual outcry of a disgruntled and exiled opposition:

At Odziate, the population threatened to invade the town hall to protest against the mobilization and departure of reservists. The police had to intervene and made numerous arrests.

At Pavia, during a performance at the cinema, a group of students applauded a picture of troops departing for Africa. They were attacked by soldiers in the audience, who were angry at the prospect of being sent abroad.

At the Fascist barracks of Guglielmo Obercau, 300 young Fascists were compelled to depart as "volunteers." The order provoked a violent disturbance, several dozens of them fled to go.

At Galleria, there was a conflict between young recruits of the 1914 class and the reservists of 1911. The young recruits carried a banner: "Long live the class of 1914—the iron class." The reservists of 1911 retorted by shouting, "You will know about it when you go to Abyssinia. You are being sent to slaughter. Down with the war!" The militia intervened and arrested many of the reservists.

Hardships in Africa

[Ignatius Phayre in Current History]

Massawa, the Italian port in Eritrea, has a primitive town of 12,500 people, sweltering in heat that has been known to reach 130 degrees in the shade, when the first transports landed the advance guard of Italy's expedition. Fresh water was extremely scarce, for no preparations had been made for such a military invasion, and soon tankers were sent to Port Sudan, 350 miles away in Egypt, to buy water for the new arrivals. Wells were sunk in haste, but with poor success, for fresh water along Italy's Red Sea belt of 670 miles is usually brackish, nauseous stuff. As water grew more and more in desperate demand, a ration of only two pints a man per day for drinking and washing was allotted—with serious results in sickness and disability. No wonder 3,000 troopers and artisans were returned home in a fortnight!

Nowhere on earth is solar heat as fierce as on this Red Sea littoral. By day the strongest and bravest of Fascist recruits are apt to wilt and sicken. At night the soldiers and workmen sleep naked on straw mats in the narrow streets, while their fellows unload the troopships and munition tramps by the light of acetylene flares until a blazing sunrise again stops all labor.