

AMERICAN LIBERTY OUTRAGED

THE startling commotion caused by the revival of the Ku Klux Klan is now past. The novelty of seeing a return of the weird figures in flowing robes with flaming cross has satisfied the passing curiosity of some and has for a time gratified the craving of the "thrill" seekers. Now they think no more of it—to their carefree spirits the Klan is dead. But to millions of thinking Americans, its revival and continued existence are matters for serious thought. Men who did not express themselves with rage and exasperation at the original exposure of the singular and amazing purposes of the Klan, who could not fully enjoy the ridiculousness and preposterousness of the triple aim (curbing the Catholic, Jew and Negro)—now, when revelation is past and public interest is running low, regard the Klan as the embodiment of America's superlative menace—lawlessness.

Should I enter into an attempt to prove that one cannot condemn a whole sect or race, I should be deservedly branded an idiot and should be laughed from the presence of any intelligent man. Little better would I hope to fare should I let fall, "Well, some Catholics, Jews and Negroes are all right," for then I should be so illogical as to doubt the right of these citizens to associate with higher per cent Americans.

Despite the despicable meanness of mind and vehemence of heart that the creation of these ideals display in those who advocate them, we are told that thousands of young men have hurriedly rushed forward to become initiated into the mysteries and secrets of this order. Mad indeed they must be to embrace such contradictory doctrines. It all goes to show what the nocturnal display of "Old Glory" in a setting of hooded villains with undeveloped brains will do. Hearts expand at the sight of the Stars and Stripes, though an anarchist be its bearer. A little reflection would teach these pitiably ignorant klansmen what their fanatically bigoted brother knows and disregards,—that such an organization cannot justify its existence on either legal or moral grounds, and that a banditti of this sort encourages the establishment of others in kind to the ultimate ruin of the United States. Tarring and feathering a fellow

citizen is abhorrent to us all. Of course this is plainly unlawful and at best is a fiendish and inhuman practice. Yet these hypocritical rascals and cowardly gangsters, intoxicated with pretended love for the goddess of American liberty, thus violate the native rights of Americans. How galling is this to any real patriot! What right have these self-appointed ministers of justice to override the law, the bulwark of society, is a question prompted by reason.

But right is not the question here—it is might. If the victims are guilty why not apprehend and punish them legally? It has always been the American way, the only safe method. Would not one be justified in doubting the guilt of a victim and inferring that private antipathy is the underlying cause of it all? If every able-bodied citizen of America did individually what these deluded and villainous rowdies do collectively, America would be the scene of bloody combat and universal slaughter. Personally to disagree with another is not in itself justification of violence. Law is established to check this very human passion—repulsion of what displeases us. To thwart the law is the work of the revolutionist. To deprive citizens of its protection is tyranny not to be endured. The good of the nation rests upon it; hence intelligent men look askance at the high-handed actions of these self-appointed guardians of liberty. You cannot evade it. An organization that usurps the power of the courts has no place in this country; and no protestations of good intentions or noble ideals can obscure the fact that it is deserving of the severest censure. They outrage with impunity the very liberty which enables them to organize.

How self-sufficient, dogmatic, and arbitrary to declare, in one sweeping edict, war upon one-half of America's population! What wonderfully amazing confidence the individual klanman must have in his own judgment, to harrass towns, to outlaw and slay citizens, and to strike terror into communities for what appears to him a sufficient reason! Needless to say, if these men are sincere, their brains cannot encompass more than one thought at a time. This is calamitous, for the original thought is lasting. Evidently, fair-dealing does not prompt an investigation into its opposite. But either a savage lust for battle, a cold calculation for revenge, or a deplorable sense of patriotism leads these men into violence. Is not such a man a danger to society? Is not an intellect so limited, a passion so uncontrolled a terrifying evil to all law-abiding Americans?

Does he really believe he aids American progress by setting a path for every highwayman and bandit to follow? It is all clear enough. Intolerance, unreasonableness, and passion alone mark the activities of these men. Given the opportunity, the fullness of their strength would be directed against anything that displeases them, law, order, government notwithstanding. In what other light can we regard it all? A band of men conceive the idea that Catholics, Jews and Negroes are a menace to the best interests of the United States, if not actively working for its destruction. There is absolutely no reason to believe this. It is the offspring of a bigot's brain. Yet they overreach the law of the land and terrify when they so please.

These are the self-styled Americans of today? These are the champions of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. These are the men who insist upon America for Americans, providing we come up to their standard of Americanism. These are the salt of America, whose conduct if universally followed, would plunge the world into chaos and irretrievable ruin. By arbitrary violence they would bring safety to the land they would by arbitrary violence sink deep the shafts of justice. By their threats they would put us at ease. The law courts, the legislatures, the state and national governments are not fit to meet the exigencies of government. These ludicrous, white-capped creatures; these audacious outlaws; these bragging, murdering knaves of light heads and venomous hearts appoint themselves as safeguards of the constitution, missionaries of patriotism, and as saviors of outraged American liberty.

Robert Emmet Curran, '25