

If They Live, They Grow Up

The smart thing about the campus not so long ago was to read, believe, and quote well all head-lettuce purveyed by Heywood Broun, erstwhile wise-cracker of the New York World. Then one day (April 29, 1926, to be exact) the Bulletin, in a little essay on sophistication, relieved itself of this dirty dig: "One H. Broun turned a pretty phrase in baseball write-ups, so the managing editor put him on the music beat to pop up that department; and then he turned his ignorance to literature."

Came in the next mail a letter from a freshman: "Though Mr. Broun did write spots, this does not necessarily imply that he is ignorant. To the contrary: Mr. Broun is an intellengint man. He graduated from Harvard in 1910; was a reporter on the Morning Telegraph; was with the New York Tribune nine years; has been with the World since 1921. He has written many well-known books; is dramatic editor of Vanity Fair. Mr. Broun must have some intelligence, or his superiors in the profession of journalism would not have promoted him from the sports department to the literary department of one of America's greatest newspapers."

To which the Bulletin made reply: "The facts adduced to show that Mr. Broun is an intelligent man prove nothing of the sort. A degree from Harvard may be a badge of ignorance. It is only five years since Harvard brought Dr. DeWulf from Louvain to introduce Scholastic Philosophy there, and Harvard is responsible for some of the most mistaken notions of things in general that the country has known. Westbrook Pegler and Warren Brown are satisfying their superiors in the profession of journalism, and are making much, much more jack than Broun did at the same game; and as a matter of fact either of them would be a better qualified man for literary criticism than your friend Broun, as both have sipped a bit at the sources of knowledge; but none of the three has any background for literary work other than the writing of unsupported opinions to be swallowed by people who lack discrimination. You clinch the case for th the superciliousness of Broun by mentioning Vanity Fair, organ of the sophisticates in which the gullible are goofed by C nde Nast, who got too big for the Catholic Church when it told him what it had told Henry VIII about divorce."

Came then the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and Broun was kicked off the World for defending these anarchists in his column. A news account of this scandal (which added the irrelevant detail that the lady other people would call Mrs. Broun belongs to the Lucy Stone League and keeps her maiden name in "Marriage") was sent to the freshman, who had meanwhile transferred ti a very big eastern college. On the margin appeared this comment: "Anarchist in religion, anarchist in literature, anarchist in domestic life, and now anarchist in politics. This is too muc."

Came last of all a letter from the one-time freshman: "You know, Father, that since I have read more of Broun's stuff I am just about of the same opinion as you entertain concerning him. I can think of no better badge for Broun's stuff than 'Commercialized sophistry'. As long as he wrote about prize fighting, his dog and his gold fish, he was entertaining; but since he went in for judicial criticism he fell flat, miserably flat....I wouldn't even object if you considered this of enough importance for the Bulletin. It is a confession of my own ignorance of what Broun was at the time a little longer than a year ago when I rushed to the rescue of his name... Never again shall I defend him by pointing an all-knowing finger at his great record: A.B. Harvard."

The confession is received in the same humble spirit in which it is made; Laus Deo soli. If the Bulletin exposes a fraud, it is merely because it measures everything by one unfailing standard -- the truths of the Holy Catholic Church. Nineteen hundred years ago our Lord said: "He that is not with me is against Me; He that gathereth not with me scattereth." Test everything by that standard. It can't go wrong.