

FRANCIS HACKETT:
LITERARY RADICAL WITHOUT
PORTFOLIO
GEORGE A. TEST

I

The work of Francis Hackett (1883-1962) in the literary renaissance of the present century has been consistently ignored or undervalued by literary critics and historians. Indicative of Hackett's current devaluation in the world of letters is the fact that neither the Literary History of the United States nor the Literature of the American People mentions him as a literary radical, although his was a pioneer voice in that critical movement, antedating both Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne. A few volumes of American literary criticism mention him only to underestimate or misinterpret him.

Hackett did not produce a volume comparable to Brooks's America's Coming of Age or Bourne's The History of a Literary Radical which helped to crystallize and direct the thinking of the times. Nor did he, like Mencken, pour out a series of volumes publicizing his "prejudices." Moreover, in 1922 he left literary criticism and journalism, returning to them briefly during World War II. Except for two collections of reviews, his ideas, widely known, respected, even heralded by his contemporaries, now lay buried in the "Friday Literary Review" of the Chicago Evening Post, which he founded and edited from 1909 to 1911, and in the New Republic, of which he was literary editor from its beginning in 1914 until 1922.

Yet, as this paper will attempt to show, as the first editor of the "Friday Review," Hackett's was the first important voice of literary radicalism in the land, setting the direction and tone of the "Friday Review" and helping to blow the sparks of the Chicago Renaissance into a blaze. After a hiatus of three years, he carried his pen and ideas to New York where he made the New Republic a prominent spokesman in the world of letters. Although the literary radicals were never a coterie, Hackett knew, supported or worked with most of them at some time during his career. In Chicago Floyd Dell was his associate editor, and Van Wyck Brooks wrote reviews and a column for him. On the New Republic Randolph Bourne was a colleague. And Mencken, who looked upon Hackett as the only worthy soul on the staff of the New Republic,¹ contributed to a symposium edited by Hackett for the London Nation, later published as On American Books. Widely known and respected in the heyday of the literary radicals, Hackett's literary reputation has since plummeted into obscurity.

11

When the Chicago Evening Post launched its "Friday Literary Review" on March 5, 1909, under Francis Hackett, it was embarking on a unique journalistic venture. Daily book reviews and weekly literary pages were standard fare in most important newspapers of the time. But only the New York Times, in the largest city and the publishing center of the nation, published a book review supplement.

If the New York Times supplement had priority in time, the Chicago Evening Post's supplement had Francis Hackett, and that made all the difference. With a strongly asserted editorial policy which amounted to the personal views of Hackett, a zeal to raise the standards of American criticism, literature and taste, the "Friday Review" became a forerunner of the book review sections that were to flourish in the 1920's under Henry S. Canby, Stuart Sherman, Burton Rascoe and Irita Van Doren. (Rascoe, in Before I Forget, dubbed the "Friday Review" an "intellectual institution.")

Emulating English publications and the few better American journals, Hackett drew his reviewers from the ranks of the experts rather than from ill-paid and over-worked newspaper reporters and editors as was then the practice in newspaper book reviewing. Although his reviewers were unpaid, he managed to draw upon such talent and ability as Henry B. Fuller, William E. Dodd, Edwin Bjorkman, James Weber Linn, Edith Wyatt, Alice Corbin Henderson, Lucian Cary, Henry B. Hemenway, Llewellyn Jones, Ellen Fitzgerald, I. K. Friedman, Christian Brinton, Van Wyck Brooks and Floyd Dell.

But it was Hackett who made the "Friday Review" the successful journal that it was. Militantly expressing the radical views of "modernism," attacking the shibboleths of the genteel tradition, embracing realistic and "decadent" foreign writers, Hackett made the "Friday Review" as close to an avant garde periodical as a book review supplement supported by a conservative Chicago newspaper could be. Thus Hackett's book supplement was the first significant voice of literary radicalism in the literary renaissance. Mencken had, of course, already published his studies of Shaw and Nietzsche, and in November, 1908, had begun reviewing books for Smart Set. His sentiments, however, did not reflect the policy of the magazine. In England Van Wyck Brooks was bringing out his Wine of the Puritans by paying half the publishing costs. But fuller appreciation of both Brooks and Mencken was to await later publication. Hackett, at 26, editor of a nationally circulated book review supplement, was breaking ground and sowing seeds for a crop that would be harvested within a decade.

Hackett once wrote, half facetiously, one suspects, that there were two kinds of average readers of the "Friday Review": one, young intellectuals with a narrow range of ideas who thought anyone who differed with them reactionary; the other, matronly ladies in love with literature as a

balm for disappointing lives but suspicious of ideas (May 12, 1911, p. 4). Actually a member of "The Little Room," Hackett could confidently address those intellectual and/or wealthy members of Chicago society who were concerned with cultural betterment. Readership also extended into publishing houses of the East and the editorial rooms of leading journals. Somehow the "Friday Review" drew praise from such disparate personalities as John Spargo, William Lyon Phelps and S. Weir Mitchell. Cale Young Rice, apparently irked by an unfavorable review, noted that "your review is so rapidly acquiring the reputation for skillful theft of literary reputations, great and small, that you must feel quite happy" (November 18, 1910, p. 4). An English reader claimed that Hackett was the only American editor of a literary paper to speak his mind, and found no English paper that could compare with it for "alertness and good sense" (February 24, 1911, p. 4). Newcomers from the wastes of the West such as Burton Rascoe and Floyd Dell marvelled at the daring ideas, the force of style and the cosmopolitanism of the brash young Irishman.²

Successful as he was in stating his views (and in selling books), his post was a precarious one. Hackett's brief stint with the Chicago American and his observations of the American press in general led him to criticize strongly its "mendacity" and "venality." Thus while the editorial page of the Evening Post supported the status quo and the commercial interests of the nation, Hackett attacked the blatant commercial "genius" of America, reviewing books on socialism, business malpractice and sex. When Hackett wrote endorsing inter-racial marriages, only intervention by Dell saved him.³ Such threats to his freedom made Hackett especially sensitive to censorship. Six times within the first year of his editorship he spoke out on the subject, discussing William Winters' dismissal as drama critic from the New York Tribune, George Bernard Shaw's troubles with Press Cuttings and other current manifestations of censorship.

The literary taste and sophistication of the "Friday Review" did nothing to contradict the claim made in the second issue that its "level of opinion established ranks with that of the leading journals in America" (March 12, 1909, p. 4). Hackett's own opinions were well formulated and his knowledge of the international literary scene allowed him to search out and print the best that his meager budget and limited space would allow.

Although Hackett gave page one space to American books nearly as often as to English books, the general inferiority of American writing, its cause and cure, was a constant theme. Between 1909 and 1911 Hackett featured William Vaughn Moody's The Faith Healer, Ellen Glasgow's Romance of a Plain Man, Percy MacKaye's The Playhouse and the Play, Jack London's Revolution and Other Essays, Henry James' The Finer Grain and Edward Sheldon's The "Nigger," among others. Vachel Lindsay's first volume, The Tramp's Excuse, and Ezra Pound's first work in prose, The Spirit of Romance, were also reviewed.

The policy of the book supplement, announced in the second issue, was "to make book reviews interesting. This is the first editorial requirement." For Hackett there were two barriers to this goal: "the slough of the advertisement seeker, on the one hand, and the academic bore, on the other." He concluded: "It is the editor's ambition . . . to maintain a standard against all mercenary and complaisant considerations, which will, in a manner by no means grim, secure a genuine service to the book-reading public, and a service to good literature" (March 12, 1909, p. 4).

Here Hackett identifies two of the targets against which he inveighed incessantly throughout his critical career: the commercialism that infected journalism, literature and art, and the "genteel tradition," epitomized by all that was academic. According to Hackett, magazines with large circulations employed "emasculated teachers like Hamilton Mabie Wright and Henry Van Dyke" and ran book departments with "neither character nor taste." A stronghold of the professors was Francis F. Browne's Dial, which in 1919 celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. On this occasion Hackett wrote a congratulatory editorial on "the only simon-pure journal of literary criticism, discussion and information that has any claim whatever to be regarded as an establishment and institution" (April 22, 1910, p. 4). Nevertheless its reviews were "less adventures of the soul than pedagogic exercises," and some months later in a discussion of American criticism, Hackett noted that "we feel oppressed with respectability when we read the Dial. . . . It is terribly against the Dial that mandarins like Barrett Wendell should indorse it. Few periodicals could survive that."

"What we need in America," he concluded, "is to lift criticism out of its caution and anxious regard for the sameness it can exhibit and lead it to exhibit real likes and dislikes, pungent and vital feelings" (January 27, 1911, p. 4).

What he asked of criticism he also asked of literature itself. When Thomas Nelson Page claimed that American novels were as good as English novels, Hackett strongly disagreed.

Are they written as conscientiously . . . ? Do they make life seem as rich, as significant, as pungent, as momentous? Do they go as deep or exhibit as much insight? Have they as valuable a subject-matter? Are they as close to life? Are they as disinterested or as inspired? Are they as alive with ideas or as quick with wit?

Except for Twain and Howells (James he counted as English), there were Jack London, Mrs. Wharton, Robert Herrick, Henry Fuller, Ellen Glasgow, O. Henry, David Graham Phillips. "Our younger novelists cannot offer a single person fit to be judged in the same class as the most notable younger novelists in England" (April 1, 1910, p. 4).

Thus Hackett diagnosed and described the hiatus in literature and criticism that marked the pre-World War I period.

Hackett's prescription for this condition was a healthy infusion of the best that was thought and said, especially from the current English literary scene and as much Continental literature as was available. On the editorial page Hackett's pen roved widely, restricted only by his tastes and interests and whatever editorial hobble he would submit to. Concerned mainly with the literary, publishing and journalistic scenes, Hackett also wrote editorials on child rearing, the commercialism of Christmas, the death of Simon Newcomb, dreams and racial prejudice. On the "Magazine Critique" page Hackett assessed the best articles in current magazines. He also wrote a column of "Literary Small Talk," which ranged over the literary scene both past and present. As a columnist Hackett might discuss Michael Monahan's Papyrus, Archibald Henderson's article in the North American Review on Ibsen, Hauptmann, Sudermann and Shaw, John D. Rockefeller's articles on "The Principles of Business Success" in World's Work, Jack London's Martin Eden running in the Pacific Review, a Joseph Conrad article in the English Review, or a symposium on socialism in the Saturday Evening Post.

The "Friday Review" was characterized then by wide-ranging interests, sharply defined and well-stated opinions on both literary and social issues and a cosmopolitanism new to American letters. Floyd Dell, although not an entirely disinterested participant in the endeavor, called the "Friday Review" a "pioneer in modern civilized criticism."⁴

When Synge died in 1909, Hackett reviewed his Poems and Translations although Synge was virtually unknown in America. Recognizing that his plays were unknown, that he wrote of the Irish people in a language that was "as strange as it was beautiful," and that Synge has been "blasphemed by stupid patriots and . . . priest, who know not beauty and pervert the truth," Hackett prophesied that "Synge's fame will spread wherever English is spoken" (July 2, 1911, p. 1). But Hackett was an Anglo-Irishman, so that English literature dominated the pages of the "Friday Review." Moreover, the years 1909 to 1911 were rich in English writers and books. Thus Hackett reviewed Galsworthy, Wells, Bennett, Forster, Chesterton, Frank Harris, Beerbohm, Masfield and Swinnerton. He found space for articles by Beerbohm on James, Bennett, and Meredith from the Saturday Review, Meredith's letter to the London Times on the death of Swinburne, statements and testimony from Parliamentary hearings on censorship by Shaw, Granville Barker, Barrie, Henry James, Galsworthy, Wells, Hardy, Bennett, Zangwill and Hewlett and many other items. Since American publishers were not given to extensive publication of Continental European writers, Hackett was least successful in this area. Nevertheless, he featured reviews of Maeterlinck, Sudermann, Querido, Fogazzaro, and Frenssen. Reprinted items on D'Annunzio, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Georg Brandes, Nietzsche, and Heine appeared, as well as translations of Baudelaire's poetry.

Hackett's associate on the "Friday Review" was Floyd Dell. Like Hackett, Dell was in revolt against "Victorian sentimentalities and pieties."

"No one who is truly modern in soul," Dell said in a review of a book on Nietzsche, "can help resenting the yoke of the medieval and essentially Oriental faith like Christianity" (December 9, 1910, p. 6). Mary Wollstonecraft he called one of the "first of 'modern' women" (June 30, 1911, p. 5).

Another writer in Hackett's stable, eventually the leading spokesman of the literary radicals, was Van Wyck Brooks. In Scenes and Portraits Brooks notes in passing that Hackett "enabled me to write . . . anything that came into my head in my own way" (p. 153). By the time he began writing for Hackett, Brooks had published in England his Wine of the Puritans. In "Literary Small Talk" for September 17, 1909, Hackett noted the good reception the book had received. The following month Brooks began reviewing for the "Friday Review." "Mortal Things," his column, was Brooks' first venture in literary journalism. They suggest little of the literary radicalism, however, for which he became the spokesman in America's Coming of Age. Generally these feuilletons bear the barnacles of an almost excessively introspective personality and of an impressionistic manner suggesting fin de siècle ennui. There is nothing of the vigor, pungency and immediacy of Hackett's style, none of the involvement in life and letters that made Hackett's writing so noteworthy as criticism. Hackett had already formulated his ideas and could express them with force. Brooks seems not to have reached full potency until 1915.

Francis Hackett edited his last issue of the "Friday Review" on July 21, 1911, exhausted by two years at the editorial desk with little respite, harassed by a stodgy editorial policy, urged on by his own desire for self-fulfillment. The new editor, Dell, carried on by the impetus provided by Hackett and nurturing many of the same causes and feelings, continued to whip the genteel Dial, to welcome new and radical writers and to plump for a fuller individualism. If the "Friday Review" was ready for Dreiser, D. H. Lawrence and the Little Review when they appeared, it was to a significant extent the ideas, writings and example of Francis Hackett that made it so. Bernard Duffey credits Hackett with bringing "the new light to Chicago" and Dell with making plain "the creative powers of its rays."⁵ The metaphor is misleading. Hackett broke the ground and sowed the seeds. Dell reaped the crop. When Hackett left Chicago, the literary ground was bare. Ironically, he was not there when the crop blossomed, so others have received most of the credit.

But Hackett's labors had not gone unnoticed. Early in 1910 Hackett had reviewed on page one a book by a then virtually unknown writer, Herbert Croly. The Promise of American Life, Hackett said, stands out in the long list of political books for "breadth of vision, sanity of judgment and inspiration" (February 18, 1910). An interpretation of American history, The Promise of American Life also set guidelines whereby America could

achieve its promise, its destiny. A seminal book in American political thought, it supplied Theodore Roosevelt with a philosophical rationale for his "New Nationalism." Hackett later confessed that he felt so incompetent to judge a work grounded on such an intimate knowledge of American political thinking, that he could not bring himself to sign the review.⁶ And indeed his review is so chastened in expression that it stands out from the usual Hackett review marked by assertiveness and certainty. That Croly saw it and was impressed seems certain. Croly was a member of the "Cornish colony" which included Winston Churchill, Learned Hand, Philip Littell, George Rublee, Maxwell and Stephen Parrish, a group which intersected with Robert Herrick, Robert Morss Lovett, Norman Hapgood and Peter Finley Dunne, all readers of the "Friday Review" and admirers of Hackett's work. Although Croly and Hackett met only after Croly had offered Hackett the job as literary editor of the New Republic, it was Hackett's work in Chicago that won him the post.

Founded by Croly, staffed by Walter Lippmann, Walter Weyl, Hackett and Philip Littell, joined soon by Alvin Johnson, George Soule, Randolph Bourne and others, the New Republic must certainly be placed, as George Kennan has said, "in the foremost ranks of English language journalism of all time."⁷ As envisioned by Croly, the New Republic was to serve as a leavening agent in the unpurposive national mass. Hackett in Chicago as editor of the "Friday Review" and Croly in New York as editor of the Architectural Record since before the turn of the century had been formulating their dreams of an enriched culture directed by a realization of the national destiny based on a higher individualism working for the collective good. This too was the goal of the literary radicals.

The Chicago Evening Post and the New Republic were in different hemispheres politically, but the tenor and scope of Hackett's work changed very little in passing from one to the other. The "Friday Review" operated in a literary ice age. But by the time the first issue of the New Republic came out in November, 1914, there was a thaw in literature that was eventually to reveal a fertile landscape. Not that the millennium had arrived; but working as a member of a group which shared his hopes and concerns, participating in a literary life that was beginning to show some signs of sophistication, these made the work of the New Republic less thankless than the labor on the "Friday Review" had been. But the job of cultural demolition and reconstruction was essentially the same.

Hackett's output on the New Republic was more varied than it had been for the "Friday Review." In addition to reviews of literary works, he contributed editorials on a variety of topics, wrote short stories, sketches, essays and columns, reviewed plays, as well as a substantial number of books on non-literary topics. This variety and freedom, plus a greater amount of writing over a longer period, allowed Hackett's ideas and opinions to achieve sharper delineation and fuller expression than was possible

under the various restrictions of editing the "Friday Review." But the essential content and emphasis shifted very little; Hackett's was a persistent voice in the ranks of the literary radicals.

From the beginning of his career, Hackett was an uncompromising critic of the literary status quo in his evaluation of the content and standards of American culture. A critic such as John Jay Chapman, Hackett could both support and reject. In an editorial in the "Friday Review" in 1910 Hackett said, "We agree with Mr. Chapman that until the commercial enchantment is broken in America the struggle for culture will be difficult." But, he continued, Chapman's plea has the "fatal defect: it is academic." Against the humanists, Irving Babbitt, Stuart Sherman and Paul Elmer More, Hackett made the same indictment. "The essence of Mr. Sherman's criticism," Hackett said, "is American correctness, that bloodless correctness to which New England has given its wintry flavor" (NR, xiii, January 12, 1918, p. 318). Paul Elmer More's "temperament and habit of mind," Hackett felt, "are the same as a conservative banker's. . . . What he feels is usually meagre and grudging. What he thinks is almost always one-sided and illiberal. His temper is censorious." ". . . A little experience in the actual problems of men and women would . . . [act] on most of his abstractions as fresh air acts on mummies" (NR, xxvi, April 6, 1921, pp. 163-164). When Bliss Perry's The American Spirit in Literature came out in 1918 Hackett attacked it as "tame, platitudinous but immensely respectable." Its homage to the Puritans failed to recognize, according to Hackett, the "legacy of literary impoverishment" left by the tradition (NR, xvii, March 15, 1919, p. 221). Hackett's uncompromising refusal to see anything good in American academic life and its debilitating effects on literature may have been behind the attack by Brander Matthews on a series of articles on American civilization, edited by Hackett for the London Nation and published in this country as On American Books. This book contained articles by Joel Spingarn, Padraic Colum, H. L. Mencken, Morris L. Cohen, and Hackett. Writing in the New York Times, Matthews questioned Hackett's credentials for reviewing American culture, especially with what Matthews called "alien" standards. Hackett's reply indicated that he was interested in human culture, not in speaking for America. He spoke only from good will, wishing America the best.

Early in his career Hackett had also sounded the tocsin against the trespassing of morality on art. His attitude of the relationship between art and morality is set forth most fully in a review of William Allen White's In the Heart of a Fool and an article, "The Lilies of the Field," a reply to a letter from White elicited by Hackett's review. In his review Hackett said,

When morality comes in the door art flies out the window. . . . You believe simply and humbly in the ten commandments. You believe that the wages of sin is death. You hold to the tenets of romantic love and sal-

vation by faith and self-sacrifice and law and order. And so, natural progressive though you are, you subordinate your main observations of human nature and human character to these most irrelevant principles. . . . You are an artist . . . but In the Heart of a Fool was not written with its eye honestly on the human object. (NR, xv, February 15, 1919, pp. 91-92)

A month later the magazine printed a letter from White which took up nearly a page. He defended Puritanism--that combination of the moral and the practical which is embodied in the great dramatic events of American history--as that which distinguished American civilization from European. "Is it not about all there is of America to distinguish America from the rest of the world? Is it not our contribution to civilization?" White asked.

Hackett's reply in the same issue was a lead article. It is an uncompromising attack. Quoting Bosanquet as his authority, he first established the primacy of beauty as the goal of art. "That beauty which is the largest and deepest revelation of spiritual power . . . implies no purpose excepting that which constitutes its own inmost nature, the expression of reason in sensuous form." Defending Puritanism is unrealistic, Hackett continued, especially in conjunction with any discussion of art. Psychologically, Puritanism is based on a distrust of human nature. Because of this there is repression, which in turn destroys the freedom necessary for art. Morally the Puritan is interested only in salvation. This subordination of all things to one purpose is the source of the "hideousness" (Matthew Arnold's word which Hackett quotes) of Puritan life. "The omnivorous righteousness of the Puritan, his unwillingness to forget moral purpose, to consider the lilies of the field," forced Hackett to disagree with White on all counts.

Hackett once claimed that the artistic aim of the twentieth century was the "quest of the ugly." The failure of American writers to carry on the tradition of Balzac, Dickens and Thackeray was a constant care in the Chicago days. The irrelevant encroachment of morality, the insistent arrogance of an unreal idealism, the emotional niggardliness of Puritanism, the cotton confection-like nature of popular fiction, all these obscured life, its demands, its threat and potentialities. But more than that, realism was a psychological necessity. According to Hackett, "the truth releases [people] from the mortification of their own unconscious, because 'the penetration of the object' and 'the enhanced sense of life, the emotional verification' of realism are just what the unconscious needs" (NR, xx, pt. 2, November 26, 1919, p. 8).

For himself the more realism the better. Lytton Strachey, May Sinclair, D. H. Lawrence, Stephen Crane received Hackett's enthusiastic approval. Each opened up new areas of experience, undercut unwarranted taboos, in short, commanded a more realistic approach to life. It was such

considerations that also guided Hackett in his assessment of American writers and the state of American literature.

When in January, 1917, the Drama League of America presented scenes from seven American playwrights from Fitch and Herne back to Royall Tyler's The Contrasts, Hackett was moved to point out that "we [Americans] are still children in the artistic kingdom." He went on to add that "we cannot forever go on trying to live on the unearned increment of European art." Would any other nations feel toward American literature as a recent public exchange of correspondence between Russian and English writers indicated those groups of writers felt towards each other's literatures? Not, he answered, unless we begin to take our own experience seriously. The "protective romanticism" which insists that New England fiction be "chaste and Greek and domestic," that Southern fiction be "feudal and picturesque," that Western fiction be "log-cabin and baroque," that ordinary democratic experience is less exciting than European experience, these stereotypes must give way to a wholehearted treatment of American experience (NR, x, February 3, 1917, p. 23).

Such observations proved prophetic. For when American writers fulfilled Hackett's dictum, the world did indeed turn to American writers: England to Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway and T. S. Eliot; France to Faulkner and Dos Passos; Russia to Dreiser, Caldwell and Steinbeck.

Hackett's concern for the quality of American life and literature made him one of the most enthusiastic welcomers of writers who truly attempted to depict American life and who attempted to mold new forms to express their experience. In reviewing Edgar Lee Masters' Songs and Satires, Hackett used Thorstein Veblen's work as social analyst as a guide to understanding Masters' poetry. Both, he felt, were attempting to do the same thing, both "belong definitely to an age and sphere that has new habits of thought." "Mr. Masters is a deep poetic spirit, one of the greatest in the America of our time" (NR, vi, April 29, 1916, pp. 354-356). In Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, Hackett found new forms and new material to praise.

In Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Booth Tarkington, and Willa Cather he found hope for fiction. Hackett was also quick to welcome any improvement in dramatic fare. Broadway, the Washington Square Players, the Little Theatre movement, the Theatre Guild -- all were evaluated for their contribution to a vital American drama.

Although nagged by misgivings and doubts about the literary scene, Hackett always returned to the realization that something important was stirring. While he never stopped decrying phoniness and superficiality and calling for the Americanization of the literature, he rarely failed to recognize and welcome new talent and the use of new material. When Zona Gale's Miss Lulu Bett appeared as a play early in 1921 he hailed it as "a part . . . of that wonderful Discovery of America which is now being made by Willa

Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Floyd Dell, Edith Wharton" (NR, xxv, January 12, 1921, p. 204). "The Wonderful Discovery of America!" It was for this reason that he had welcomed H. L. Mencken's The American Language almost two years earlier. Here, he found, was "the foundation for a more salient national literature." He commended Mencken for seeing dignity in the American language and for saying "that dignity will be found, and that dignity cannot fail to reveal itself, soon [sic] or later, in the words and phrases with which they make known their high hopes and aspirations and cry out against the intolerable meaninglessness of life" (NR, xix, May 31, 1919, pp. 155-156). In the light of the subsequent course of American literature there is again a prophetic ring in this statement, for the renaissance of the 1920's was predicated on just those terms.

IV

Hackett's resignation from the New Republic was announced in the March 15, 1922, issue. On March 26 he wrote to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes informing him that he had left the magazine and "the little stockade of its superiorities."⁸ He concluded the letter with "I have not been in sympathy with [the New Republic group] for a long time." What the exact differences were and what the causes it is now difficult to determine with any finality. Although the policy of the magazine was supposed to be arrived at by group decision, Hackett claimed never to have been consulted when the magazine announced its decision to support American intervention in World War I. Between Lippmann and Hackett there was "inveterate opposition,"⁹ resulting perhaps from Hackett's strong pro-Irish sentiments, which put him in disagreement with Croly and Weyl as well. By the time Hackett resigned, Lippmann had left the magazine to join the New York World and Weyl had died. Littell, suffering from a lingering illness, rarely appeared in the New Republic offices. The old originals were dropping by the wayside. The publicly announced reason for leaving the magazine was the desire to write a history of Ireland.

But Hackett's resignation can also be seen as another manifestation of the general disillusionment of the intellectuals during World War I and the years following. Although Hackett was a humanitarian liberal whose sense of the evil in man never allowed him to indulge in the unrestrained optimism which marked the activities of some liberals, there is evidence to suggest that even he was unprepared for what happened to civilization during World War I and after.

Since 1914 most of us have learned something about the mysticism and credulity of human beings. . . . Sentimentalists declare that the results of such critical insight is hopelessness. [But] . . . who wants to hope for oneself and anyone else, if hope has no better basis than that which the public action of 1914-1920 dis-

close? Our generation now knows, by demonstrations that are plastered all over the billboards of human consciousness, that humanity works on a tiny margin of decency and that a few mistakes here and there must mean decency is to be sacrificed and the barbarian put into control. (NR, xxii., April 21, 1920, p. 254)

Eleven years before, Hackett had jokingly suggested to Floyd Dell that he had no intention of dying behind an editor's desk. Then, as in 1922, he was the successful literary editor of an important journal. Never one to be the servant of success, he had resigned in each case because he felt thwarted and inhibited.

Behind him he left a record as a resolute and effective spokesman in the ranks of the literary radicals. Floyd Dell, recalling his days as Hackett's colleague, called him "a brilliant youth . . . His point of view was distinctly sociological, and represented an extreme liberalism; he had achieved a much better unification of his artistic and intellectual interests than I had--or would have at twenty-five, his age then."¹⁰ Burton Rascoe noted the "freshness and power of his prose," his "wide and untutored learning."¹¹ Hamlin Garland and Henry B. Fuller agreed that Hackett was a "brilliant essayist."¹² When Hackett's first book appeared in 1918 the reviewer for the Bookman recalled that Hackett had made the "Friday Review" "an institution national in interest" which had "directed the attention of authors and publishers to its editor." For this reason he was "one of the most conspicuous and highly respected critics of literature in America."¹³

The invitation to join the New Republic was recognition of his position in the pre-war world of letters. His fearless independence and critical acumen made him a natural choice for the new post. George Soule, a colleague on the New Republic, remembered him as "serious, witty, aggressively incorruptible, and somewhat unpredictable in an Irish sort of way."¹⁴ A tribute in mid-career by fellow editor Philip Littell struck at the heart of Hackett's ideas. "Truth to his own impressions is Hackett's point of honor as a critic."¹⁵ This drive for sincerity he also demanded from writers and other human beings. A comment by Justice Holmes touches on another of Hackett's attributes. In a letter to Sir Frederick Pollock he commends Hackett as having "in literary matters . . . more power to utter the unutterable than anyone I can think of."¹⁶ Harold Laski, a frequent contributor to the early New Republic, found "more intuitive rightness about his judgments than any critic writing in English."¹⁷ He was in fact a witty and serious writer with a flair that made his style almost as audacious as Mencken's. That his revolt against the phony and superficial and his championing of things modern and American were perhaps more a response to a personal need than the result of critical doctrine need not detract from the services he performed for literature of the time. He thought of himself as a journalist, a kind of literary publicist. He admitted that he was no critic in the

higher sense of the word. Yet it is not true, as William Van O'Connor has said, that he took his liberal modernism for granted. He was too much of an intellectual for that. If not backed up by an extensive rationale his critical and philosophical ideas nevertheless cohered into a consistent and intellectually acceptable position.

Hackett's credentials as a literary radical rest upon his basic belief in the desirability of a fuller individualism whose realization was thwarted by an emotionally and intellectually poverty-stricken culture, by unjust political and unfair social systems. At the center of this conviction was literature, at once an expression of the vapidness of American culture and a medium for the reconstruction of that culture. The role of the critic was to bring the culture and the literature into a more valuable relationship which in turn would serve both the culture and the literature which was a part of it. To do this he could draw upon the new thinking in psychology, sociology and philosophy, and the literary tradition of the nation. All this Hackett had in common with the literary radicals, although each had his own way of mixing and emphasizing the elements so that no two were alike. Yet today Hackett's literary reputation languishes in obscurity. Whatever the reasons, it is time to recognize again what his contemporaries--fellow literary radicals as well as other writers and critics--realized, that Francis Hackett played a significant role in an important literary movement of this century.

State University College,
Oneonta, New York

Footnotes:

¹ Letter to Dreiser, April 6, 1915; Guy J. Forgue, ed., The Letters of H. L. Mencken (New York, 1961), 62-63; see also Letter to Untermyer, February 6, 1920, 177.

² Burton Rascoe, Before I Forget (New York, 1937), 318; Floyd Dell, Homecoming (New York, 1933), 188-196 *passim*.

³ Bernard Duffey, The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters (Lansing, Mich., 1954), 174.

⁴ Dell, 195.

⁵ Duffey, 180.

⁶ Letter to present writer, June 9, 1960.

⁷ George F. Kennan, "Walter Lippmann, the New Republic, and the Russian Revolution" in James Reston and Marquis Childs, editors, Walter Lippmann and His Times (New York, 1959), 38.

⁸ Unpublished letter, Holmes Collection, Harvard Law School Library.

⁹ Robert Morss Lovett, All Our Years (New York, 1948), 173.

¹⁰ Dell, 195.

- 11 Rascoe, *op. cit.*
 12 Hamlin Garland, Companions on the Trail (New York, 1931), 457.
 13 "Chronicle and Comment," Bookman, xlvii (May, 1918), 312.
 14 Letter to present writer, August 23, 1958.
 15 "F. H.," New Republic, xvi (October 12, 1918), 309.
 16 Oliver Wendell Holmes and Frederick Pollock, Holmes-Pollock Letters, ed., Mark De Wolfe Howe (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), 96.
 17 Oliver Wendell Holmes and Harold Laski, Holmes-Laski Letters, ed., Mark De Wolfe Howe (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), I, 36.

ESSAY, MAN, ON MR. FOUNTAIN'S DIXIE

A. L. LAZARUS

If what they say about Dixie isn't true
 enough, Pete Fountain's statement is a coup
 to send collective unconscious back to class
 and make New Orleans truly worth a mass.
 No need to freeze one's entrails under lock
 and stock when Bourbon St. toasts Plymouth Rock.
 (Let drummer skip a beat, then double-sock.)
 Look away while Peter parses tense and age:
 the opus on the piper's lips melts rage;
 once conjugated by his clarinet,
 the tune explains Antoine to Antoinette;
 the palsies of dark knees and knuckles cease
 when Pete's heroic coupling with the piece
 is made. To paraphrase Yeats' accolade,
 we cannot tell the player from the played.
 Forget the lovelorn bigots' hunting-horn.
 Rejoice! Handclap footstamp religion's born
 again. Let fingers snap and knees bend native,
 breaking, bruegheling, in a *récitativo*.
 Glory be to God right on this sphere;
 repeal the scare and repossess the air!

Purdue University