James E.Pollard
Kit-Kat Club
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With Honor, Not Without

I.

If I were Jerry Folkman or Ray Kearns, or Harold Yoehum, I would probably start with a text. If so, it would be from Matthew XIV, the 57th verse:

> . . . . And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

But unlike Jerry or Ray, or Harold, I shall not follow the text; on the contrary, without irreverence or disputation, I shall take the opposite view, namely, that a prophet in our time and place - Ohio, that is - does enjoy honor and recognition both in his lifetime and thereafter.

Another title for this paper might have been An Adventure with a Genius. This is one name of a book about Joseph Pulitzer, the blind publisher, which appeared under two titles. Its original publication in 1914 was entitled Joseph Pulitzer, Reminiscences of a Secretary. Six years later it appeared under the Adventure title. Its author was Alleyne Ireland, whom I met briefly at the 1927 Institute of Politics, at Williams College, where I had the good fortune to be secretary of a round table on dictatorships of which Henry Russell Spencer was the head. Ireland had been one of Pulitzer's carefully picked secretary-companions during the last year of the publisher's life.

What I wish to discuss are a few of the men and women who, over the years have added to the luster of Ohio in the arts, particularly literature and the fields related to it. As you will see, I propose to talk about one man in particular. And in so doing, if the perpendicular pronoun is used quite often, I hope you will understamd.

Ohioans are neither immodest nor overmodest when it comes to

talking about their state. But I sometimes think we are a little remiss in appreciating fully what manner of men and women Ohio has produced in painting, sculpture, music, poetry, the theater, and, especially, writing.

Ohio has an impressive record as a seed ground of writers and writing. Many of you doubtless know of the "Bible" in this field, namely, Ohio Authors and Their Books, published in 1962. Its editor was Professor William Coyle, of Wittenberg University. The book itself was a project of the Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association.

It covers the period from 1796 to 1950. In any such work more or less arbitrary decisions had to be made, such as the period covered and, in particular, the definition of "author." Even then it was a major problem to decide which names to include.

Professor Coyle explains that about 15,000 names of authors associated with Ohio were on file. The number finally chosen was somewhere around 5000. Among these, of course, are the obviously great, the near great, and some not so great. Some, it must be confessed, surely are there only by virtue of a wide stretch of the imagination.

As to the yardstick used, Professor Coyle defines author "here as a person who has published at least one original book of general interest." Ten categories, including writers of textbooks, cookbooks, almanacs and other specialized works, are excluded. Yet some of these, too, have been significant.

Some of those included must have been listed for other reasons of prominence. Among these are such former Presidents of the United States as William Henry Harrison, Benjamin Harrison, U.S.Grant, and Warren G.Harding. Grant's Memoirs, completed on his very deathbed, are important only because of the man and the circumstances, and surely not for literary merit.

As Professor Coyle points out, "The literary output of Ohioans,

both in and out of the state, has always been large and varied." The largest category has been comprised of religious books. This is explained by the activities of church groups in Ohio and, im particular, by its many denominational colleges and universities. The next largest category consists of books by journalists or in the realm of journalism.

A quick rundown will suggest the wide scope of authorship in Ohio and/or by Ohioans. Among historians are such notables as H.H.Bancroft, James Ford Rhodes, the Schlesingers, and our own Harlan Hatcher. Ohio poets have supplied variety and spice along with some quality. Perhaps the most outstanding Ohioan in the realm of verse was the Negro poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. But there were such others as Salmon P. Chase, of all people, and John H.Titus, credited with having written that tear-jerker, "The Face on the Bar Room Floor."

Of Ohio journalists included there is almost no end. We have forty-eight names on the bronze tablets which make up the Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame on the campus. Twenty-one of them are listed in Ohio Authors. Other journalists included there, in my opinion, were writers or editors rather than authors.

Of so-called newspaper humorists from Ohio, three in particular were D.R.Locke, editor of the Toledo Blade, and author of the Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby letters which so convulsed Abraham Lincoln that he would interrupt a cabinet meeting to read them aloud. Another was Charles F. Browne, of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, who enjoyed an international reputation as Artemus Ward. The third was F.M. "Kin" Hubbard, born in Bellefontaine, but who lived in Indiana where he wrote the widely quoted sayings of Abe Martin, homespun Hoosier philosopher.

Just for the record two brief lists will be cited: one consisting of other native Ohioans who made their marks as serious writers, and the other of men and women from elsewhere who achieved a measure of fame

as authors and who lived or worked at one time in Ohio. "Fame" in this context is somewhat hard to define. Some of it was real, and even lasting, but much of it was obviously transient. Nor is mere popularity, however profitable, to be confused with merit or permanence.

Among the "natives" one would have to include such names as those of Sherwood Anderson, whose Winesburg was set in Clyde; Ambrose Bierce, whose career I traced the last time out in a Kit-Kat paper; Louis Bromfield, of Malabar; Clarence Darrow, best known as a legal defender of unpopular causes, but also a surprisingly prolific author; Zane Gray, for fiction; Fannie Hurst, novelist; Alfred Henry Lewis, of Wolfville Days and other titles; Virginia Claflin Woodhull Martin, who achieved a variety of fame as co-editor, with her sister, of Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, avowed advocate of free love, accuser of Henry Ward Beecher, and said to have been the first woman nominated for President of the United States; and, last but not least, in a group chosen rather arbitrarily, Burton E.Stephenson, Chillicothe librarian, best known perhaps for his fat Book of Home References, but whose lifetime output filled 15 feet of book shelving.

This completes a cursory over-view of native Ohio authors save for two. One of these is William Dean Howells, regarded by some as the greatest author so far produced in Ohio. I shall deal briefly but separately with him. The other, as yet unidentified here, I shall discuss shortly at some length.

First, however, a brief listing of a few of the non-native Ohioans included in Ohio Authors. Any such list is, of course, more or less arbitrary. Among these might be Dorothy Canfield Fisher, daughter of the fourth president of the University, who had a good deal of impact on her time; Washington Gladden, best known doubtless as the longtime

minister of our First Congregational Church, for whom Ohio Authors lists fifty-six titles; Lafcadio Hearn, that unlovely American who went to Japan, married a Japanese and made a new life and writing career for himself; Ludwig Lewisohn, onetime troublesome Ohio State faculty member, who had quite a following forty-odd years ago; William Holmes McGuffey, the educator; O.O.McIntyre, a native of Indiana, but who is associated indelibly with Gallipolis, an adopted Ohioan who in his later years made Broadway his habitat but never ceased to be a wide-eyed small town boy with a large following as a New York columnist; Ruth McKenney, also of Indiana, but mainly from Akron, who had bitterness in her heart and felt she had to write her little read Industrial Valley, a tale of labor trouble in Akron, but who, ironically, climbed to rapid fame with My Sister Eileen which she did originally as "pieces" for the New Yorker from the sheer necessity of having to eat; John McNulty, onetime Columbus reporter and rewrite man, who enjoyed fame and a new career in New York City - some of you will remember his My Boy Johnny, expressing his wonderment at becoming a father in late middle life; William Sydney Porter or O.Henry, as he is better known, a North Carolinian who was a onetime "guest" in the Ohio Penitentiary.

Three others in this group, finally, would include Samuel Shellabarger, a distinguished member of this Club, whose novels such as Captain from Castile, had a wide following a score of years ago when Dr.Shellabarger was headmaster at Columbus School for Girls. The second would be Harriet Beecher Stowe, born in Connecticut, but who spent eighteen years in Cincinnati where she absorbed a vast amount of border atmpsphere. There are some who credit her Uncle Tom's Cabin with helping to bring on the War Between the States. And there is also the tale that Lincoln, upon meeting her, said "So you're the little lady who helped bring on this terrible war." She began writing the book for publication in weekly

installments, hoping to make "enough so I may have a silk dress." Uncle Tom appeared quickly in book form all over the world and its impact upon public opinion was tremendous.

The third was Brand Whitlock. In my high school days there, Whitlock was mayor of Toledo. I remember seeing him standing at a street corner watiting for a street car to take him downtown. Whitlock was a native of Urbana but got into newspaper work in Toledo and Chicago. Walter Havighurst, of Miami University, who did the Whitlock sketch in Ohio Authors. calls him a "writer, humanitarian, and statesman," - all of which he was. His authorship covered the period 1902 to 1931. It ranged from a political novel, The 13th District, to Belgium; A Personal Narrative, which is his first-hand account of the German rape of Belgium in World War I and his service there as U.S. minister. Among other things he attracted wide attention by his efforts to save Edith Cavell, the English nurse, from execution after the Germans convicted her for helping Allied prisoners to escape. In this he failed. Havighurst lists seventeen titles for Whitlock.

(Parenthetically, it should be a matter of pride to Kit-Kat that of the 135 members listed in The Kit-Kat Club of Columbus, published two years ago in connection with this Club's fiftieth anniversary, eighteen are in Ohio Authors.)

Unquestionably the greatest Ohio author of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries was William Dean Howells. He is widely regarded as the Number One literary figure so far produced by Ohio. This is on the combination of his total output - Ohio Authors lists the incredible total of 101 titles-, the variety and quality of his work, and his recognized influence as the dean of American letters.

In 1856, at 19, Howells came to Columbus as a political writer for several country newspapers. Then followed a brief stint on the Cin-

cinnati Gazette, after which he returned to this city to work on the Ohio State Journal. At 24, Howells wrote an opus that affected his life but of which, in later life, he was not very proud since it was essentially a piece of hackwork. This was a biography of Abraham Lincoln for use in the 1860 campaign. (This original copy I bought some years ago as "surplus" from the Ohio Historical Society; it is a collector's item of sorts.) Perhaps because he could not get away or was too busy as editorial writer for the Ohio State Journal, Howells made the strange mistake of not going to Springfield,Ill., to talk with Lincoln and to get first-hand material for the book. Instead, he sent a friend. He was quoted later as saying of this, "I missed the greatest chance of my life." Soon after he took office, Lincoln named Howells U.S.consul at Venice, Italy, where he spent four interesting and fruitful years. This was reflected in his writings. Howells returned to the United States in 1865.

He was identified successively with the Nation and especially with the Atlantic Monthly, of which he was assistant editor for five years, followed by ten years as editor-in-chief. Then he turned in earnest to fiction, some of which echoed his Venetian exposure and some his Ohio background. At least eight of his books deal with or reflect the latter. Havighurst calls Howells "the most productive writer of his time." This is borne out not only by the quantity of his output, by the fact that it spanned a period of sixty-one years, 1860 - 1921 (two volumes appearing posthumously), but especially in that it ranged through such diverse forms as short fiction, novels, drama, poetry, criticism, travelogues, and autobiography. Here, indeed, was a giant among giants.

II

After this circuitous and somewhat arbitrary literary journey, let us turn finally to the central figure in this recital: James Grover Thurber, native of this city, sophisticate, and certainly one of the top men of American letters in this century. I undertake this with some misgiving for others who are or have been members of this Club knew him or were associated with him better if not longer than I. Among these were his two long-time colleagues on the Dispatch, "Cherry" Cherrington and George Smallsreed. Among others are Jim Fullington and Adolph Waller. Some of the older ones, now gone from among us, had him as a student: Joseph Villiers Denney and Billy Graves, and possibly Louis A.Cooper and George H.McKnight.

I cannot recall when I first knew Jim Thurber. We overlapped, as it were, as undergraduates. Only forty-four days separated us in age yet he was a year behind me as an undergraduate. My first real if somewhat vague recollections of him stem from the early 'Twenties when he was a Dispatch reporter and I was with the Ohio State Journal. The principal basis for what follows, however, lies in an experience I had with him in 1951-52. This was in a rather extended collaboration with him on Bob Ryder and Billy Ireland who were central figures in chapters in the well known Thurber Album. Later we had an occasional exchange of notes, with a final flurry of correspondence over his sketch in Ohio Authors which I was privileged to do.

Four things stand out about Jim Thurber. One was that he was a stickler for precise detail and exactly the right word, but also for absolute accuracy. Second, although he is spoken of generally as a humorist, which he was, he ~~regarded~~ looked upon himself as a serious writer and hoped that in time he would be so regarded. Third, somewhat by accident, he became an artist of sorts whose caricatures of women and dogs - and of

men and children,too, for that matter - were characteristically Thurberian. Finally, his growing and ultimately complete blindness over a period of thirty years produced difficulties but in a way seemed to stir him to even greater effort. In this we recall the similar affliction that befell John Milton.

In these parts, at least, The Thurber Album is certainly one of the best known of Thurber's works. On the title page he describes it as "A New Collection of Pieces about People." The date is 1952 but the "pieces" began, as he explains, "some four years ago, as a kind of summer exercise in personal memory, but before long I began writing letters to people, or calling them up, to verify a name or a date, and in the end I had research material weighing as much as a young St.Bernard: letters, carbon copies, newspaper clippings, magazine tear-sheets, notes, eulogies, poems, photographs, and nearly a dozen books. The writing of the book had turned into a major project for me, . . ."

He could not have done it, he continues, "without the generous and unselfish help of a number of men and women who have answered questions, ransacked old trunks, and plodded through old newspaper files." After thanking his mother "especially," he names thirty-five other persons as having helped him in gathering material for the book. Among them are six members of this Club.

The book consists of sixteen "pieces," all but one of which, he notes, were published originally in The New Yorker. Three of them dealt lovingly but analytically with members of Ohio State's English faculty. They were: "Man with a Pipe," Joseph Russell Taylor; "Beta Theta Pi," William Lucius Graves; and "Length and Shadow," Joseph Villiers Denney. Graves and Denney, of course, were longtime members of Kit-Kat.

Chapter XIII, "Newspaperman: Head and Shoulders," had to do with Gus Kuehner, longtime city editor of the Dispatch. Thurber paints him as a rather cynical, hard-boiled slave driver type who took a dim view of

collegians, especially young reporters. I knew Kuehner from some time after 1913 when I became campus correspondent for the paper at $5 a week. Kuehner was a little on the tough side but I never knew him as Thurber painted him although I suspect his was the truer and more discriminating view.

The next two chapters, if you will pardon me, are where I came in for a small part. They are "Boy from Chillicothe," or Billy Ireland, long-time gifted and beloved Dispatch cartoonist, known especially for his full-page, in color, Passing Show page on Sunday, always full of warm human foibles and oddities. The other was "Franklin Avenue, U.S.A." This was a warm appraisal of Robert O.Ryder, shy, erudite but intensely human editor of the Ohio State Journal from 1919 to 1930 when his health broke from overwork. He toiled six or even seven days a week, - full days at home where he wrote his editorials longhand in pencil, and two trips to the office. You could almost set your watch by him - promptly at 5 o'clock, when he brought in his copy, got his mail, scanned any proofs that were ready for him, and returned home at six. Then he was back again at 8, to repeat the process.

It was my great good fortune and rare privilege to work under Bob Ryder for more than three years and, in particular, from about 1926 until his retirement - and for years afterward -, as a contributing editorial writer. With a classical education at Yale, Bob Ryder had a lucid style, along with a gift for subtle humor, that Central Ohio has rarely seen. The lucidity and cogency went into his editorials, but the humor was reserved for his editorial "paragraphs" which were among the most widely quoted and reprinted of his time. Unhappily this is an art form that has largely disappeared or, in my thinking, the few who try to practice it now are at best pale imitators. The Ryder "paragraphs" began with rather long ones, as much eight or ten lines, and shaded off to as little as

one or two lines at the tail end of the column. This was always the lower half of the second editorial column, and each day's quota was exactly the same length as the one before.

I knew Billy Ireland quite well, but not nearly as well as I knew Mr.Ryder in whose home we sometimes visited on a Sunday afternoon, or had dinner with him and Mrs.Ryder at the Faculty Club, after which they would go "birding" in Greenlawn Cemetery. On only one occasion were we able to persuade them to have dinner with us in our home. They came, but only after he assured himself as to who else might be coming. There was only one other, a well known medical man, then our neighbor, who has been a guest here a number of times. On Mr.Ryder's part this was a phase of his shyness because, while he was actually warm and cordial in his dealings with people, he was never a joiner and was practically never seen in public places. Yet he was a notable figure, of public dimensions, throughout Ohio, but especially in Columbus.

My minor role in what turned out to be The Thurber Album was something of an accident. Early in September, 1951 Thurber wrote Lester Getzloe, longtime member of the Journalism faculty, about gathering material on Bob Ryder. "Getz," as we called him, and Thurber were kindred spirits. Thurber never came to town that he didn't see Getzloe, and the two couples would have dinner together. But in this matter, "Getz," who had a fine mind and, like Thurber, was something of a rebel, as well as somewhat lazy, was not interested.

Getzloe turned Thurber's request over to me and I sat down and put together a lot of loose material about Ryder. I was especially interested in this because I felt it was long overdue and, in fact, soon after Mr.Ryder's death proposed something of the sort to Arthur C.Johnson,Sr., then editor of the Dispatch and a longtime member of this Club. This was to have been a labor of love, but nothing came of it.

Thurber acknowledged promptly what I had sent him in a rather long

letter dated October 4,1951. Between then and May,1952 there were ten other letters from him, exploring and pursuing details about Bob Ryder, his life, his ways, and his points of view. (Mr.Ryder, his wife, Florence,- the "certain noble woman" of his paragraphs -, her widowed sister, Mrs. Clark Hammond, and their aged mother-in-law - widely known also in the paragraphs as "our dear mother-in-law"-, ~~were living~~ lived later in Berkeley,Calif., where Mr.Ryder's bachelor brother was professor of Sanscrit at the University of California. I had kept up a correspondence of sorts with Mr.Ryder who, for a time, was unable even to hold a pencil and who never was able to resume any writing although his letters showed that he hoped to.)

Most of what I was able to contribute to the project had to do with Mr.Ryder and only a little with Ireland. The latter was gregarious where Mr.Ryder was shy, as I've said, but they held each other in high esteem, enjoyed each other hugely, and even formed The Polar Explorers, an imaginary club, to which only the two couples belonged, and which served a humorous purpose at their occasional Sunday night dinners together.

Thurber's end of this portion of the correspondence ranged from a short note of about sixty words to one of some 900 words. At a rough guess, the total is some 5600 words. Thurber was most appreciative of help as well as generous. In his second letter he wrote, "I propose to regard you as collaborator, which you are, and fairly divide what I'm paid on this piece." I never knew what he received, for this was none of my business, but in time The New Yorker sent me its check for $300. I would gladly have done the work, and it was considerable, for nothing. It involved poring over old Ohio State Journal files, culling the most likely paragraphs, and correspondence with surviving members of the Ryder family.

The Thurber correspondence is too voluminous to do more than touch upon some of the high spots here. While Thurber was bent upon getting large

quantities of factual information about all of the persons he depicted ultimately in the Album, his letters are very revealing about the man himself. In his first letter he remarked of Mr.Ryder, "I have always thought, and my conviction increases, that he was one of the best American humorists. I read all his paragraphs for many years and learned a lot from them. I saw him a dozen times, but met him only twice." Thurber added that he, Jphn McNulty, and Joel Sayre, another Columbus writer, and, oddly, a brother-in-law of Billy Ireland, "often talk about Bob."

Of Mr.Ryder's seriousness, Thurber added that it "is natural in a humorist, since it is simply one aspect of humor, which is no good if it isn't based on a sound and serious nature. It is not strange that he couldn't write finally, since he was probably written out as well as burned out." From the very first in this exchange, Thurber was a stickler for detail: he remembered Mr.Ryder as driving an electric, and I knew him as driving only a Cadillac, then relatively rare in Columbus. Thurber cited Jake Meckstroth as remembering Col.Wilson, Mr.Ryder's father-in-law and his predecessor as Ohio State Journal editor, as "a pumpkin pie man, but I remember him mainly as a cherry pie man."

In the fall of 1951, when this correspondence was going on, the University was plagued by the so-called speaker screening issue. By coincidence, honorary degrees were pffered at that time to Thurber and to Fred Lazarus, of Cincinnati, to be conferred at the December convocation. Mr. Lazarus accepted but Thurber, after much soul searching, finally declined his. This was in the doubtful belief that for him to take the degree then would somehow range him on the side of the administration whose policy he opposed strongly. (This was the only time, incidentally, that anyone ever declined an honorary degree from the University. There is no mention of it in the Trustees' minutes nor have I found any trace of it in the official correspondence of the time which I have screened for the Archives.)

I know something of Thurber's inner torment on this point at first hand through Getzloe to whom he wrote about what was troubling him and "Getz" showed me some of the correspondence. Finally, as I recall, on the Friday before Thurber was to respond to the invitation he 'phoned Getzloe from New York and talked with him at great length, thinking out loud as it were. It was fairly evident that he was strongly disposed not to take the degree, which Kenyon and Williams had already given him. Getzloe told me at the time about the phone call and early the next week showed me the carbon copy of Thurber's letter formally declining the degree.

It may appear that I have digressed, but actually I have not for I have been leading up to the major portion of his second letter to me in this series. After a first paragraph dealing with the business in hand, he got off on the campus issue as follows:

> An indignant Ohio State alumnus and friend of mine has just sent me most of the clippings about the screening scandal, or patriotic defense movement, as General Dargusch calls it, or just good old common sense, as the governor of Ohio calls it. The questionnaire phase is terribly alarming, together with the fact that such a gag rule, by its very nature, is likely to extend rather than decrease in time. I wonder what they will do in the case of various men, like myself, who have spoken without notes, to English and journalism classes. None of the clips I have does more than mention Dr. Cecil Hinshaw, and while he is named a Quaker and a pacifist, I find nothing about overthrowing the government. I was surprised and pleased to see the courage of many Ohio State professors and other Columbus people, since there was a great deal of fear and secrecy during the terrible case of "Scarlet Fever," a name substituted for "The Sun-Dial," after the magazine fell into the hands of a bunch of Cleveland Jews," as a prominent, and even powerful, Ohio State man wrote me, apparently taking it for granted that any good alumnus would share his views. I regret that I promised to make no public issue of this if the name of the Sun-Dial was re-

stored. It was restored so fast it was hard to believe.

I have always been a vehement anti-communist, a fact that could be proved in a few hours of research, but I have no doubt that, like almost all writers, I will one day be named a Red. Several men and women whom I know to be anti-communists or non-communists have been named, and even the New Yorker is mentioned in Counter Attack with this line "Writes for the New Yorker." We have had three thousand contributors, and they represent all colors of politics, but a good 95% are as anti-communist as the magazine itself.

It is my personal belief that a communist speaker could not possibly sway an Ohio State audience and that in refusing to let communists talk, the university deprives itself of a wonderful chance to heckle and confound such speakers. If we cannot be strong enough Americans to withstand such arguments, if we are in such danger of being politically debauched, then all we have in the Western Conference is the greatest football area in the world. I have just finished the Denney piece, but I will insert a few sentences about the gag rule. As president of the AAUP he boldly attacked interference by "state legislatures, ecclesiastical bodies, and powerful influences operating through trustees." I wish he were still there pitching and I would like to hear his views on "Gigantic Ohio State," the only piece that ever left out Chic Harley. Leaving out Kettering is all right with me."

In his next letter, three weeks later, he inquired about certain photographs he needed for illustrations. He reported that the pieces on Graves and Denney would be "printed week after next. It took me a year, off and on, and I don't see how anybody could object to it."

He seemed to recall that Ireland needed surgery in the 'Twenties but

had a phobia about hospitals, and that his great friend, Bob Wolfe,Sr., actually had a hospital operating room secretly constructed in Billy's home and that Billy went ahead with the operation. I know that Bob Wolfe was

extremely fond of Ryder and Ireland, and I believe he gave them expensive presents, including Cadillacs. I thought Bob Wolfe was quite a man, in spite of human faults, he was devoted to his friends, which is something. He also helped me, without knowing it, to kill one of the biggest Journal stories during my days as a Dispatch city hall man. This was the time that George Bricker made the mistake of telling me, at council meeting, that he had a streamer beat coming up the next morning. I figured it was a famous report on police conditions, got up by the mayor's committee, which Mayor Thomas had decided to quash. I told the mayor I thought the Journal was running the story and he called Bob Wolfe at midnight and Wolfe ordered the story killed. Bricker never forgave me, or himself for saying, "Baby, I'm ruining you tomorrow morning." We had both stolen copies of the report.

It was a little more than a month until I heard from Thurber again. By now he was ready to do the Ryder piece having, as he said, re-read all the material he had received from Ray Evans, Jake Meckstroth, McNulty, and Joel Sayre as well as from me. As always he was extremely avid for precise details: "a copy of Hugh Huntington's remarks on the Ireland-O.Henry matter," whether Mr.Ryder, as Meckstroth had said, had had a slight stroke or whether he was simply burned out or even whether this was the result of his great disappointment over the defeat of Al Smith for President in 1928. He wanted still more Ryder paragraphs and was particularly "interested in last lines, the Franklin Avenue Protective Association, his wife, and his remarks on girls and young women." He wanted to know what had become of the originals of Ireland's cartoons and Passing Shows; Mrs.Ireland had those that had not been given away, especially the Shows. He wanted also a photostat of a Passing Show "if you can line it up for me." He closed this letter by saying, "I am very keen about this story of the two great men. My tentative title is 'Franklin Avenue, U.S.A." And this was how it turned out except that there was a piece about each man.

The next letter, ten days later, dealt mostly with further details about Ireland. Among those to whom he turned were Bernard Bergman, a classmate of ours, who was from Chillicothe and who briefly had been managing editor of The New Yorker; Burton Stephenson, the Chillicothe writer and librarian; George Smallsreed,Sr.; Ray Evans,Sr., and others. He was seeking copies of famous Ireland cartoons dealing with the birth of the Dionne quintuplets in 1934, the Scopes trial, and the Shenandoah crash in 1925.

In another ten days came another letter, acknowledging other material I had sent in the meantime, including the Dispatch obituary on Ireland. "My God," he commented, "that Dispatch obituary on Ireland is awful! There is a Dispatch English whose chief master is Johnny Jones, that is more awkward than broken English." Thurber took some exception to the printed account, as for example, its failure to mention the cartoonist's crusade to restore Grant's "log-cabin birthplace," and he felt that the obituary made "Billy a paragon who made no mistakes, and this is not right." Thurber felt that this was particularly true in the realm of politics where Ireland's views "were intuitive and largely motivated by a candidate's personality."

In a postscript he added that "Hugh Huntington has sent me a fine, complete, and fascinating account of the Ireland- O.Henry episode." He closed the P.S. on this note: "I don't mean to brag that I knew Ryder intimately as a person, but he was the first influence on me as a humorist and it still lasts."

In my previous letter to him I had suggested that if he was writing about interesting men in Columbus he might want to consider Haz and Perry Okey, the well known local but completely different brothers, and about Campbell Chittenden and his unusual will. In this same postscript, he wrote: "I know Haz Okey but never even met Perry, and I didn't know Haz well enough for him to come into the definition of my book, which deals

only with the outstanding people in my life in Columbus, and the ones who affected my life and work so that I can't get them out of my memory. I wish I had known the Okeys intimately, for they are colorful and wonderful men. You have caught one of my blind spots, however, in the Campbell Chittenden business. Sounds interesting."

In a few days came a one-paragraph note about having lost some of the Ryder material and asking for another copy. With it was a carbon of a letter to Ray Evans,Sr., the day before in which Thurber spoke of "a second letter from Hugh Huntington, and the Ireland - O.Henry business becomes a great mystery, as seen from the viewpoint of my intensive checking on O.Henry who had sold stories before he came to the Ohio pen. There is a record of Dr.Thomas in my O.Henry stuff, but not a word about Ireland, or any missing short stories. He seems to have written only twelve during his Columbus years. . . ."

Late in January he wrote that he had finished "the Ireland piece, a very long one, and one of the best in the book, and I have started to write about Bob Ryder." He added that he needed only "one more thing and then won't bother you again. On the day after Hallowe'en, 1921 or 1922, I think, although it may have been 1920 or 1923, Joe Sayre wrote a front page feature story for the OSJ about the goings on in downtown Columbus that night. It was an impressionistic piece that Ryder liked and that Harry Brandon appreciated,too, but Arthur Johnson would have killed it, and Kuehner snarled, 'This goddam story is - modernistic.' Ryder was the editor for me, as he was for Joe and McNulty, but I was an afternoon newspaper man. I'd love to get a copy pf that Sayre piece to quote from, showing how Ryder encouraged talent, and understood it."

The New Yorker had spelled the name of Joseph S.Myers, head of our Journalism department from 1914 to 1934, "Meyers" and I had called Thurber's attention to it. In a P.S. to the foregoing he wrote a bit tartly:

> I know how to spell Myers, but the New Yorker checkers found it spelled Meyers in some official Ohio State records, and changed it without telling me. They also wanted to spell Harley's name Chick, but I prevented that. It appears as Chick in a standard sports source book, which also lists him as a fullback. I stopped that,too. Walter Camp made Chic fullback on his 1916 All-America because of the abundance of great halfbacks that year. One of them was Pollard of Brown, of a different race than yours.

He closed on this note: "please let me know Bob Ryder's address on Franklin Ave."

Evidently I was able to send him the two Hallowe'en pieces. "I think I picked out Sayre's all right," he remarked. "He wasn't quite twenty-two then, and he got only ten dollars a week when he started on the Journal." (This was true.) I must have pointed out that as editor Mr.Ryder rarely had anything to do directly with the news content of the paper which was under the exacting and microscopic eye of Harry P. Brandon as managing editor. On this point, Thurber continued:

> I know about Ryder's lack of actual personal direction of the news, but you will agree with me that every department of a paper is stamped and stained with the character and personality of its editor, especially if he is a great man like Ryder. Ryder had nothing to do,directly, with George Bricker's Sunday story about the open-air meeting of the Klan, but it got in the way he wrote it. Johnson, the character and personality of the Dispatch, murdered mine and showed his true colors. An editor gets assistant editors who reflect his policies and beliefs, or they wouldn't hang around as long as Harry Brandon did. Reiker (sic) and, usually, Kuehner, reflected Johnson's views. None of these three men would have printed the Hallowe'en stories you sent me, . . . My story of the Klan meeting was the best story I ever wrote.

Then he got back to the business of Mr.Ryder's home address. "Bryden Road begins at Parsons Avenue," he recalled, "but its first number is 691. I can't remember if 1041 Franklin Avenue would be farther out than Monroe Avenue." (It is, between 21st and 22nd Sts.,but the first numbe

is 510.)

is 510.)

A little farther on he returned to the subject of O.Henry. On this he reported:

> For your information, I wrote Jim Fullington simply to see if he had ever heard of the Ireland - O.Henry story. He wrote me that he had phoned Mrs. Ireland, and she gave him her version in detail. That makes four separate ones, but the more the better. It is possible that the Ireland manuscripts were some or all of what later became the first eleven stories in "The Gentle Grafter." These came out in 1908, and all of them derived from the penitentiary years. He didn't wait that long to print his first prison tale, after he got out, but so many stories rewritten from memory would take time. This is just my speculation.

Thurber had said he would not "bother" me again but in four days he did, with apologies. This letter had mostly to do with Mr.Ryder and his paragraphs, years after their first appearance. But first, Thurber wrote:

> . . . I have to have some estimate of how many years Bob Ryder lived on Franklin Avenue. I write quite a lot about the avenue, for I know that region extremely well. I was born on Parsons Avenue, between Rich and Town, my grandfather built the first house on Bryden Road in 1884, and my family lived in several different houses in that region.
>
> I find myself, to my surprise and dismay, a little disappointed in the Ryder paragraphs. I don't mean just yours - my brother sent me a hundred, from between 1908 and 1929 - and I have a copy of the book, "The Young Lady Across the Way," . . . I think it may be my age, or something, together with the fact that it is hard to find the best out of 50,000 of anything. I figure there must have been that many between 1903 and 1929. I was crazy about the paragraphs as far back as 1910, and in 1914 I ran a column of my own in the East High X-Rays, [note: Thurber entered the University in the fall of 1913] in imitation of him, and sent Ryder a tear-sheet each month. He reprinted one that winter . . . .

He ended this by saying that he had "finished the piece and you will like it." He promised to send me a carbon copy and wished to have it returned "with any comments or corrections as soon as possible.

Again there was a long, revealing postscript. He wrote:

> I agree with everything you said about Heinie Reiker (sic), whom I never liked. He rewrote and ruined two or three humorous feature stories I did for the Dispatch, and when my Sunday half page was stopped, he told me that it was on behalf of new advertising. H.E. Cherrington, who ran the top half of the page, still things (cq) that was the reason, but what actually happened was this. Cherry wrote a paragraph about Urbana, Ohio, which made the town mad. A number of its citizens wrote irate letters to old Bob Wolfe, who said to Johnson and Reiker (sic), "Stop that page."
>
> As for Harry Brandon, he offered me the job of drama critic on the Journal when Daisy Krier died. I was getting $40 on the Dispatch and $30 more as press agent for the Majestic Theatre and Indianola Park, and Brandon offered me $35. Daisy once told me her check was doubled each week as the result of an extra check authorized by Ryder.
>
> The Dispatch fired lots of people and didn't do much to hold the others. After four years I was still getting $40, the same amount that Milt Caniff was getting after five years. McNulty came to the Journal for $60 a week. Sayre worked for many months for $10 a week. Wolfe hired Joe on account of Billy Ireland, I think, and said to Joe, "Do you know the motto of the state of Alabama?" Sayre knew. It was "Here We Rest." This was part of the Journal-Dispatch determination to keep its people from going to New York.

(Parenthetically, we learned, for Thurber's benefit, that Mr. Ryder lived earlier at 1231 Fair Avenue and from 1908 on at the Franklin Avenue address, in a house owned by his in-laws, the Wilsons, who lived next door.)

This was all but the end of the "adventure." In May, 1952 Thurber

wrote a note from Bermuda to say that he would send me a copy of the Album when he returned to New York in June.

In the meantime, to his dismay - and mine - he had discovered several minor factual errors, no less irritating because they were relatively trivial. These were: 1) a mistake in the first name of former Governor Joseph Benson Foraker; 2) Mr.Ryder always wore a blue bow tie, not black, as the "piece" said; 3) he did not go to Williams College - that was his brother Jack; and, 4), probably worst of all, it was San Francisco and not Oakland Bay.

On the last score he had had two letters from California setting him straight about the Bay. "The NEW YORKER under Ross," he lamented, "didn't make that many mistakes in two years, and I hope it's only a passing letdown as the result of grief and a natural lack of concentration in the months following his death." He laid the blame for the Bay business at the door of The New Yorker's checkers, but also at his own door and mine. I took a partial disclaimer since he never sent me the carbon copy to be checked as he had promised and at that time I had only seen the Bay once, nearly twelve years earlier on a foggy night.

The final letters, between 1957 and 1960, had to do with sundry matters: Getzloe's death; a "wonderful clipping about old man Fisher," his grandfather, that I sent him; the death of "Peg" Getzloe less than two years after that of "Getz"; an item I came across in the Archives about his State Department appointment in 1918 in which year, he said in a note, "was the start of the American jitters about loyalty. I was considered safe because all four grandparents were born in the United States."

Finally, there was an exchange between us in the spring of 1960 over the 3500-word sketch I did about him for the Ohio Authors volume. I asked him seven specific questions about his work and himself which, to my great satisfaction, he answered candidly and at length. Later I sent

him a carbon copy of the manuscript which he corrected and which Helen, his wife, marked for him. But this is a separate story, however revealing, and has no place here.

So to the sixteen portrait pieces in the Album, it seems to me that Jim Thurber in these letters to me unwittingly, and certainly unintentionally, penned a seventeenth about himself and about Columbus in the early 'Twenties, along with some of the men of that day who gave the city color and character not seen in these times.

You will note, I hope, that I have not tried to analyze, much less to appraise Jim Thurber. I have sought, rather, to let him speak for himself and to tell this story of forty years ago in his own way and especially in his own words.

I would not at this point attempt to define "genius," but most assuredly James Thurber was one. In this connection, his own words, spoken April 29,1959 at Columbia University in tribute to Mark Van Doren, are most appropriate here. The occasion was a gathering of 500 of Van Doren's friends in connection with his impending retirement from Columbia after forty-four years there. Thurber said of Van Doren that he was "so many men that I have to open my front door and my windows when he visits me in order to let all of him in."

So might it be said of Thurber, whose true monument is not in the Thurber Towers or ~~center~~ Village, however imposing or glamorous, but in his life and his work and his spirit which live on after him. He enjoys, indeed, especially great honor in this, his own country, where he lived and about which he wrote so much, and so left it forever in debt to him.

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