

THE FORUM

DECEMBER, 1925

Vol. LXXIV



No. 6

A NON-PARTISAN MAGAZINE OF FREE DISCUSSION.
IT AIMS TO INTERPRET THE NEW AMERICA THAT
IS ATTAINING CONSCIOUSNESS IN THIS DECADE.
THE FORUM GIVES BOTH SIDES. WHATEVER IS
ATTACKED BY CONTRIBUTORS THIS MONTH MAY
BE PRAISED IN LATER ISSUES

THE KLAN: DEFENDER OF AMERICANISM

HIRAM WESLEY EVANS

*The Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan in an authorized
interview with Stanley Frost*

I*N the September FORUM, William Robinson Pattangall, leading Democrat of Maine, declared his belief that the Klan was un-American; that by its official acts it attacked and undermined the very spirit of Americanism which it was its avowed objective to defend. In the present paper, the Imperial Wizard, the leader and head of the Klan, replies to Mr. Pattangall's charges. He defends the Klan's intolerance, — a necessary counter weapon with which to combat the greater intolerance of its opponents.*

I*N seeking a brief for the Ku Klux Klan and an answer to the criticism by William Robinson Pattangall, published in the September FORUM, the field soon narrowed down to one man, Hiram Wesley Evans, Emperor and Imperial Wizard of the Klan. He is the only man authorized to speak officially for it, and sympathizers who are not publicly identified with it all find reasons for silence. Dr. Evans*

has now been head of the Klan for nearly three years. He went in as leader in a reform movement, and his service as Wizard has covered the period which included reform of the early abuses, its tremendous growth, and its appearance as a power in national

as well as local politics. In their present form the Klan doctrines and program have been largely shaped by him. He may, therefore, be considered typical of the whole movement, and the leader in its effort to escape from its early unpopularity and establish itself on a sound basis.

Dr. Evans, who was a dentist before he went into Klan work some six years ago, is a Texan in his early forties, stocky, blue-eyed, and genial. He once described himself as "the most average man in America", and though, since he has become Wizard, he has grown much and has become familiar with lines of thought and methods of expression which are hardly usual in the average man, he has not lost "the common touch", and the description is still apt. He is also, — perhaps "therefore" is more correct, — a man of strong common-sense, not given to fine-haired distinctions or theorizings, but he maintains that while he always tries to be practical, he is also always a practical idealist. Thus he is, unless one completely accepts the weary cynicism of Main Street, very largely a personification of the common people. It is his ability to voice their inarticulate emotions and convictions that has given him so great a hold over the common people who make up the bulk of Klan strength. — *Stanley Frost.*

* * *

It is hard to answer criticisms of the Ku Klux Klan directly and categorically, because what the Klan needs is not so much defense as explanation. Most attacks have been deliberately unfair and so misleading that reply is impossible. Even those in which fairness is sought, as it clearly was by Mr. Pattangall, are superficial through lack of understanding of underlying conditions and purposes. Many of the faults alleged in such surface criticisms must be admitted, but in any fair analysis they have little effect on the main issue.

In the case of the Klan that main issue is usually missed because the men who make the criticisms have lost contact with the deeper emotions and instincts which, far more than their brains, control the majority of men. Our "intellectuals", particularly, in the process of becoming intellectualized, have cramped their emotional perception to such an extent that they are crippled, like a bird-dog that has lost the sense of smell.

They, therefore, are quite nonplussed when confronting a "common" man, and cannot understand his mind, his actions, or the causes for which he fights.

It is necessary to try to make these emotions, convictions, and instincts better understood before it is possible to answer criticism in detail, in any way that will be intelligible. The Klan can be evaluated only by starting from the point of view of what it means to the average Klansman. It cannot be judged properly as a movement either from the wrong start it made, the mistakes it has committed, the weakness and errors of its leaders, or even the blundering, uncertain, and groping statements with which some of its adherents have tried to tell its objectives and methods. These are the surface. The real value of the Klan, or the real evil, is to be found in the needs, the purposes, and the convictions of the great mass of Americans of the old stock. It is only because the Klan has met these needs and voiced these convictions that it has won strength.

There is no possibility of trying to prove the soundness of the Klan position, or of the controlling instincts and beliefs of the common people of American descent, to any of those who insist on measuring either by the purely theoretic philosophy of cosmopolitanism: of universal equality in character, social value, and current rights. I will not attempt to argue about that doctrine. Science does not support it, and certainly the average American does not believe it. Our attitude toward the Orientals proves this, no matter what our oral professions may be, as well as does our treatment of the Negro.

Mr. Pattangall, on this point, makes an argument for social equality. It is not a matter that will be settled by argument. It will be settled, if ever, by race instinct, personal prejudices, and sentiment. We Americans all deny equality to ten millions of our own citizens; deny it with facts and in fact, if we do not deny it by argument. The idea itself, however it may be glossed over and given theoretic acceptance, is actually abhorrent in practise to the American mind. And in fact, actual social equality between whites and any other race is not practised to any important extent anywhere on earth. Facts prove the idea unworkable. This beautiful philosophy, therefore, the Klan will not argue about. It merely rejects it, as almost all Americans do.

Neither will we argue at all about the questions of white supremacy. In that case, even, we do not propose to permit any argument to avail. We may be intolerant in this, but we will not delude other races into looking forward to privileges that will, in truth, be forever denied. The Klan looks forward to the day when the union of a white person with one of any other race will be illegal in every State of the Union, and when the question of social supremacy will have been settled on a much safer basis than that of racial mongrelization.

With people who hold the cosmopolitan view of these two things we cannot have useful discussion; there is a gulf between our minds. But with those who are willing to face facts, including the facts of mind and emotion and race and instinct and human nature, we have a case to present. We of the Klan believe that we can prove our case to all who will agree with us on one fundamental thing. It is this:

We believe that the pioneers who built America bequeathed to their own children a priority right to it, the control of it and of its future, and that no one on earth can claim any part of this inheritance except through our generosity. We believe, too, that the mission of America under Almighty God is to perpetuate and develop just the kind of nation and just the kind of civilization which our forefathers created. This is said without offense to other civilizations, but we do believe that ours, through all possible growth and expansion, should remain *the same kind* that was "brought forth upon this continent." Also, we believe that races of men are as distinct as breeds of animals; that any mixture between races of any great divergence is evil; that the American stock, which was bred under highly selective surroundings, has proved its value and should not be mongrelized; that it has automatically and instinctively developed the kind of civilization which is best suited to its own healthy life and growth; and that this cannot safely be changed except by ourselves and along the lines of our own character. Finally, we believe that all foreigners were admitted with the idea, and on the basis of at least an implied understanding, that they would become a part of us, adopt our ideas and ideals, and help in fulfilling our destiny along those lines, but never that they should be permitted to force us to change into anything else.

That is the basic idea of the Klan. There is, perhaps, much to be said for the liberal idea of making America a mongrel nation, but that involves the two points which, as I have pointed out, the Klan will not debate. We hold firmly that America belongs to Americans, and should be kept American. All who believe this have much in common with us, and as Mr. Pattangall said, belong with us in spirit if not in actual membership. The whole purpose of the Klan is to bring this belief to fulfilment. We make many mistakes, but we are doing this one thing, and no one else is even trying to do it. Within a few years the America of our fathers will either be saved or lost, and unless some other way is found, all who wish to see it saved must work with us. If they think our methods wrong, or the details of our ideas, we will be glad of correction.

There can be no doubt about the traditional American spirit, the Americanism of the pioneers, which we are trying to save. It is to be seen in the character and spirit of those pioneers, far more than in formal political documents. Americanism is not wholly lovely, perhaps. It is certainly neither soft nor lax, neither easily ductile nor imitative, neither silken nor oily. It is a thing of rugged steel, tempered and forged in the terrific stress of the task of wresting a continent from savages and from the wilderness. It is welded of convictions, independence, self-reliance, freedom, justice, achievement, courage, acceptance of responsibility, and the guidance of his own conscience by each man personally. If inheritance counts for anything, it is to be found in the children of the pioneers far more than in any other group on earth, for only those who had this spirit survived.

And, — remember we are looking at facts, — it has been bound up from the first with the spirit of Protestantism. This had to be. Only men and women who dared speak to their God face to face could have had the courage and self-reliance necessary to the mighty work of the pioneer. It is true historically; and, in fact, Protestantism has never been able to survive except in the so-called Nordic countries. It is a vital part of all Americanism, of all successful democracy.

In his criticism of the Klan Mr. Pattangall defines Americanism as a spirit that "cannot tolerate class, caste, or religious distinctions in politics, social life, or legal standing; especially it

cannot for a moment endure the breeding and exploitation of hatred and prejudice as a means to swing public opinion and political power." He goes on, ". . . the Klan, on its own statement, does just these very things, and makes a principle of doing them."

The Klan accepts this definition of Americanism, except as to social equality of other races, but it accepts it not merely as an abstraction to be talked about, but as a heritage to be fought for when threatened. It is his second statement that we challenge. The fact is, instead, that *the Klan finds all these violations of Americanism being practised deliberately and persistently, and it makes a principle and a duty of resisting them.*

We find as a fact that both the spirit and the development of Americanism are threatened and have already been greatly weakened. After a century, we know that the melting pot has failed, — the very phrase was coined by an alien! Except in small degree, the people we have recently allowed to come in not only do not become American, but they do not desire or attempt it. Many of them cannot. Dr. Eliot's recent statement that the experiment had failed was only a belated recognition from the best of the intellectual leaders of a fact which we of the Klan had known for years. The war proved it conclusively.

Dr. Eliot, when he finally admitted that alien groups could never become assimilated, proceeded to abandon the older ideal of a *united* Americanism, and argued that we should become a medley of diverse groups, working together in mutual good-will and toleration for the advancement of the country. Setting aside the fact that such groups cannot be trusted to work for the good of anything but themselves, so long as human nature remains what it is, it is historically true that this has never succeeded. When diverse groups live together, one must rule. Unless some one group does have control, the nation becomes so disunited that development is checked, and it always shortly falls a prey to some other nation, perhaps less liberal in mind, but stronger in character.

We are already seeing in America the workings of this law of disunity through alienism. Our counsels are divided, our progress is checked, our spirit weakened, our purpose as a nation confused and fumbling. We are drifting away from national unity:

in fact, we are being carefully and deliberately driven away from it by alien ideas and excessive liberalism toward them. The Klan, knowing this, believes the whole tendency must be stopped, and that control of the nation should return to, and remain in, the hands of men of the character and spirit of the pioneers who made the nation, a spirit most often found in the descendants of those pioneers.

We believe, also, that all who foment this disruption through alienism threaten the very foundations of all the things that have made America great. It is because of this that the Klan is intolerant — prejudiced. It is intolerant of this attack; intolerant of the people who are trying to destroy our traditional Americanism. We do not admit that we are more intolerant than our opponents; it seems to us as intolerant to condemn the Klan's attempts to save Americanism as it is for us to condemn the attempts to subvert it. But, if that is intolerance, we are proud of it.

And in our intolerance, as in other things, we are true to the American tradition; for this is our intolerance: We will not endure attempts to tear down the fundamentals on which the whole structure of our nation and our civilization is based. So long as these are not threatened, tolerance should be unlimited; we of the Klan do not wish or try to limit it. But the ideas upon which the nation rests, and which set us apart from other nations, are in a way like a corral fence. While the fence is undamaged there is no need to worry, no matter how much the animals inside may kick up and mill around. But when the fence is weakened or threatened, then it is time for action. So, in the nation, toleration becomes a vice when fundamentals are in danger. That time has come, and we who are the heirs of the American tradition are called upon to act.

The aliens who are constantly trying to change our civilization into something that will suit themselves better can hardly be blamed, though they must be opposed. Their blood, their instincts, their training, and their faiths are all different from ours. They have many fine qualities, and some among them are fortunately splendid citizens and show thoroughly American traits. But on the whole they simply are not Americans, will not become Americans, have no understanding of, nor sympathy

with American ideals or ideas, and now and for many years will inevitably use all their power to overturn them.

The American liberals for whom Mr. Pattangall fears, are to be blamed for much, however. They have extended their liberality till they are willing to help the aliens tear at the foundations of the nation. They have become one of the chief menaces of the country, instead of the sane intellectual leaders they should be.

It is evidence of the unsoundness of the present extreme of unbridled liberalism that the first understanding of the danger came to the common people, instead of to the "best" people. In fact, the intellectuals have lost their leadership in America through liberalism toward lax morals, the undermining of all religious faith, and the weakening of patriotism. They have gone so far that the good sense of the people has rebelled.

Moreover, since the danger was pointed out to them, instead of helping fight it, the liberals have given out only condemnations of the growing protest, platitudinous comfortings, and bally-hoo stuff about the beauties of alien things and ideas. They give, also, an almost joyous welcome to alien criticism of everything American. The unopposed attack on the Puritan conscience is only one illustration; our liberals to-day seem ashamed of having any conscience at all. Tolerance is more prized by them than conviction, and is insisted upon even toward people who show no tolerance of us. A Jew may say or write what he pleases against America and American ways, but if an American voices the least criticism of a Jew even the American liberals turn to and hound him as narrow, prejudiced, intolerant, bigoted, and anti-Semitic. It has been so all along the line. America is being undermined, and is deserted by those who should have been her first line of intellectual and moral defense.

This is a situation which has recurred many times in history. It seems characteristic of great movements that they should come from the plain people, and not from the intellectuals. Perhaps it is because the people work less by reason and more by their instincts, which, being older than reason, are more to be trusted, — I believe the best modern psychologists bear me out in this, — that the liberals and the intellectuals and the "best" people are so often wrong, and the "rabble" so often right. The intellectuals were against Christ; many of the "best" people

opposed our American revolution; the "leaders of thought" supported slavery; more recently the liberals became pacifists and refused to aid America in her time of stress. It is so now once more, in the struggle just starting to rescue America from the alien and from alien ideas; the liberals are pacifists again, — if not worse! Mr. Pattangall is quite right; liberalism as it is to-day is seriously in danger from the Klan movement. At least we hope so.

We of the Klan, however, cannot claim the sole credit for this. The whole common people is in reaction, and there is grave danger that the reaction, in its turn, will go too far. There is constant need of a sound and healthy liberalism, inside the bounds of sound sense and sound morals, but even this will suffer if the present justifiable protest is ignored or suppressed. The Klan is blamed for stirring up trouble, but all we have done has been to give an outlet, — a voice and an organization, — to the bitter resentment of millions of Americans.

Mr. Pattangall is right again in declaring that not only Catholics and Jews and Negroes are affected by the Klan movement, but that the whole population must divide on the question. We cannot lament with him, however, that such questions as tariff, taxation, and the League must drop into the background. The issue of Americanism involves the whole foundation of both the present and future of America. There can be no more important or useful line of division.

This leaderless stirring of the common people, this groping after a solution that would save so much that is dear to them, was already well under way when the Klan appeared. The Klan was groping, too, at first, and it does not yet know just how to fulfil the mission entrusted to it. It was at first almost wholly a protest, a cry of dissatisfaction. And, like so many protest movements, it used many wrong and somewhat panicky methods, it spoke uncertainly and sometimes foolishly. But from the first, also, it spoke for the common people, voiced their instincts, gave them an outlet for their distress, and offered at least the beginnings of a means to resume control of their own country.

That is the story of the Klan, its purpose, and the reasons for its being, as the Klansman sees them. We do not believe they need any defense. But, since we are so often and so bitterly

accused of prejudice and intolerance, I would like to say a little more about that.

Our intolerance seems to us a little different from that shown by our opponents, and it is not, either, exactly the kind with which we are charged. We do not include in it any hatred against anyone. We have no desire, and we make no attempt, to abridge the freedom or control the ideas or dictate the religion of anyone; or to punish anyone for disagreement with us, even by the threat of damnation. Especially, we do not break up the meetings of our opponents; we have never interfered with any gathering or tried to stop any speaker or to mob any procession. Neither have we committed any mob murders nor killed any peaceful paraders for racial or religious reasons. Yet our own list of dead from these causes is a long one.

It is rather curious that science recently has been finding good grounds for supporting these very intolerances of ours. It has found, for example, that racial mixtures are unstable, and that the mongrel offspring of such mixtures is below the standard of either parent. It has shown, in addition, the great fundamental differences between races, and that the resistance to change in those fundamentals is very strong. It has emphasized the importance of heredity and inborn characteristics as against education. All this disproves the old hope that education could be depended upon to make Americans overnight of the most diverse people. It proves that the alien's ideas, which are so contradictory to ours, are a part of him and will remain a persistent danger to us. It justifies our racial exclusiveness.

Plain recognition of facts supports our opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. I have watched with interest the discussion in *THE FORUM* as to whether the Roman Church is fighting Americanism, but this is another case where facts are more eloquent than any argument. The facts are that the Roman Church has always opposed the fundamental principle of liberty for which America stands. It has made certain compromises, taking advantage of the tolerance we give but which the Roman Church itself denies, and is trying through these compromises to win control of the nation. But it has made no admission that it has abandoned its old position.

The strenuous effort of the Roman Church as such, and of

Catholics as such, to win political control *as a matter of religion* is so thoroughly taken for granted by every politician that it seems rather ridiculous to see it solemnly debated. The Klan did not start the battle over the Catholic issue in politics; the Klan did not force it to the front in the last campaign. It was the Catholic leaders, abetted by Mr. Pattangall himself, who insisted on the fight in the Democratic convention.

We are accused rather scathingly of using the religious issue in politics as a means of securing political power. The quarrel has been forced upon us, but even so we do not oppose any man in politics because of his creed; we do not believe that religious belief should ever bar any man from full political equality or from public office. But we do believe, and we act on that belief, that any man who brings or tries to bring his church into politics or public office, who acts in politics as the partisan of any church or takes orders from any church, or who appeals for votes on the basis of any creed, — we believe that such a man, who tries to make political capital of his creed or to use public office for the benefit of his church, should also, and therefore, be opposed because of his church and creed.

The real objection to Romanism in America is not that it is a religion, — which is no objection at all, — but that it is a church in politics; an organized, disciplined, powerful rival to every political government. A religion in politics is serious; a church in politics is deadly to free institutions. But the Klan, in calling Protestantism to arms, cannot fairly be accused of mixing church and state, for the Klan is not a church or sect, it represents no ecclesiastic organization or sacerdotal hierarchy. The utmost that can fairly be charged against us is that we have aroused the spirit of Protestantism, from which no one church can benefit, for the defense of the Americanism of which Protestantism is a part, and without which neither can survive.

Klansmen are as disappointed as anyone that our hope that the Roman Church would be content to be an equal among equals was vain, and that the fight against it which has gone on for centuries must be renewed. But now we can do nothing less than maintain this particular intolerance until the Roman Church has shown, by word and deed, officially, that the need of intolerance against it is passed.

Another ground for our opposition to the Roman Catholic Church is that most of its members in this country are aliens, and that the Church not only makes no effort to help them become assimilated to Americanism, but actually works to prevent this and to keep the Catholics as a group apart. It is notable that few of the evils which so often stamp the Catholic in politics are to be found in Catholics of the English and French stocks who have been in this country for generations. It is notable, too, that these evils seldom appear in Catholics who have attended the public schools. But with most of its communicants the Roman Church strongly and only too successfully opposes that united, understanding, homogeneous "group-mind" which is essential to nationhood, *unless it can control that group-mind*. Just as steadily it denies to those whom it controls that freedom and independence of thought without which Americanism cannot live and which has never been developed except through Protestantism. One of the most amazing situations in all history is that seen to-day, with the free-thinking liberals joining the Catholics against the Klan.

The Jew the Klan considers a far smaller problem. For one thing, he is confined to a few cities, and is no problem at all to most of the country. For another thing, his exclusiveness, political activities, and refusal to become assimilated are racial rather than religious, based on centuries of persecution. They cannot last long in the atmosphere of free America, and we may expect that with the passage of time the serious aspects of this problem will fade away.

As to the danger foreseen by Mr. Pattangall that the Klan will destroy the Democratic party, the Klan remains calm, though it was born among Democrats. I am one myself. But if the Klan should destroy the Democratic party it will be because the party betrays America, and every Democratic Klansman will agree that if this happens the party should be destroyed.

I will not deny for a moment, however, the charge that the Klan's leadership is weak, and that the Klan has not solved the problem of the cure for our national ills. In fact, it has offered no cure and does not pretend to have one. All it is able to do is to help voice the protest of the plain people, call attention to the evils, and help diagnose them, in the knowledge that until the

trouble and danger are clearly seen, no cure will even be attempted. We wish we knew the cure and that our leadership had far greater ability. But in truth the Klan prays daily for better leaders, and the leaders pray as constantly for greater wisdom.

It is not true, however, that the Klan leadership is so ignorant and emotional that it prefers to keep certain beliefs, even if they are wrong. What I personally feel is that I have no time to study all the complicated questions which are coming up, and will not take the time, since my faith does not depend on the answer to any of them. I know that a man can be a good Christian and citizen whether he believes in evolution or not. Knowing that God has infinite power, I believe He could create a man in a single moment, or He could as easily create a single cell and, from it, man, by the process of evolution. I do not see that it makes any difference to me which method He chose, or that it is important for me to know, however important it may be for the scientists who are studying the origin of life in the hope of improving things as they are.

In other words, I myself and Klansmen in general are not going to spend our time trying to fix the exact location of the bridge of faith which each man needs to cross from the finite to the infinite. I am not going to clutter up my mind with non-essentials, nor argue such questions at all. I allow any man to place that bridge wherever it is necessary for himself. I know my own fallibility and the fallibility of any conclusions anyone may draw. For myself, I believe that the Bible is the revealed word of God, but I cannot decide and will not speculate as to just how much is parable and how much fact. I merely seek the lessons which the Almighty aimed to teach.

One word more: it is quite true that intolerance is no cure for intolerance, and that the best and only way for the creation of a united America is through education and the breaking down of all barriers between classes. The Klan has no other purpose. But education so far has largely failed, and the barriers remain after a century of effort because there is vigorous and organized resistance to the breaking of the barriers and the kind of education that would create unity. Not only the Catholic Church but other bodies have maintained their own separatist schools and in other ways have fought Americanization and assimilation. They have

deliberately refused to enter the melting pot. Before these remedies can be applied, some means must be devised to make sure that the patient will take the medicine. That is the next and immediate objective of the Klan.

To sum up: The Klan speaks for the plain people of America, who believe in an American nation, built on that unity of mind and spirit which is possible only to an homogeneous people, and growing out of the purposes, spirit, and instincts of our pioneer ancestors. We know that the melting pot has failed; the reasons are unimportant now. We believe that definite steps must now be taken to prevent ours from becoming a mongrel nation, or a milling and distraught mass of opposed groups, in which the mental and spiritual qualities that made America great will be lost forever. Therefore, we oppose all alienism in any form and the excessive liberalism that supports it. We grant to all the right to their own ideas, but we claim the same right for ourselves, and a prior right to control America.

This needs no defense with true Americans. It will, of course, be opposed by all opponents of traditional Americanism, but there is no possible compromise or agreement with them. The mistakes of the Klan do need defense, but they are not fatal. They have grown out of the conditions under which we began work, and out of human fallibility. They are being corrected. In spite of them the Klan remains the only leader in the effort to stop the perversion of our national character.



LIFE VERSUS LIVES

HAVELOCK ELLIS

Fourth Paper in the "War or Peace?" Series

PREVIOUS papers in this series have argued that the fundamental urge to war is land hunger (Henry Pratt Fairchild in the September FORUM); that war is as normal a state as peace (Frederick Adams Woods, October); that there is little hope that agriculture can be sufficiently improved to keep ahead of the increase in population (Edward Murray East, November). These views are derived from an acceptance of the doctrines of Malthus. In the present paper the most eminent of the neo-Malthusians develops the arguments for the scientific control of population. In future articles various palliatives will be suggested to stay the evil day foreseen by Malthus, and the Malthusian point of view itself will be attacked. The purpose of the series, as has been stated, is not to advance any single solution of this most pressing of all contemporary problems, but through a symposium of views to arrive at its core.

NO doubt, a change has lately come over the minds of educated people with regard to the question of population. Perhaps one should, rather, say *thinking* people, for there are so many people who are counted educated and yet seem never to think for themselves, — though that ought to be a main end of education. If there were more people among us who think there might hardly be any question of population to trouble about. But there is always a compact mass of unthinking people who follow rules that were formulated untold thousands of years ago, without pausing to consider whether these rules apply to the circumstances of to-day. "Increase and multiply": that is what, in this matter, they hear the voice of God commanding; they do not think that, according to the story, He was addressing a world inhabited by eight people, and that in the interval the Voice of God has long ceased to be heard in that sense.

The long delay in grasping this fateful modification of the ancient Divine command has, — if one may say so without offense, — been partly, though not entirely, due to America. When the caravel of Columbus, or, if we prefer, the *Mayflower*, — the vessels are here only used symbolically, — reached America the adventurers found what they not unreasonably regarded as