

The Civic Revival in Ohio

Artist in Politics: Brand Whitlock

By ROBERT H. BREMNER

"One cannot, day after day, beat against the old and solid and impregnable walls of human institutions without becoming sore and sick in one's soul."  
—Brand Whitlock, *Forty Years of It*.

BRAND WHITLOCK was the man chosen to lead the Civic Revival in Toledo following the death of Samuel M. Jones in the summer of 1904. Jones had been such a thorough-going non-partisan that he had opposed all attempts to found a third (*i.e.* Jones) party in Toledo. He believed that his own political career demonstrated that whenever the people really wished to do so they could nominate their own candidates by petition and secure their election by independent voting. But while Jones had been three times re-elected to the mayoralty, nearly all the other city offices remained securely in the hands of the Republican machine. After Jones' death, the Toledo street railway company became more insistent than ever in its demand for a renewal of its franchises. The Republican organization, whose chairman was the attorney for the company, worked openly to obtain the renewal. Many former Jones supporters now became convinced that the independent voters must unite into some kind of a political organization if they wished to prevent an unfair settlement of the franchise question. Out of this resolution came the formation of the Independent party. Whitlock, a young attorney and novelist whose friendship with Jones had brought him some political prominence, was the choice of the new party for its first candidate for mayor. He was elected to the office in November 1905.<sup>1</sup>

I

WHITLOCK'S IMMEDIATE TASKS were to defeat the determined efforts of the city's over-capitalized street railway company to secure a long-term, high-fare franchise and to prevent the Toledo Independent Movement from degenerating into a vice crusade. He had never before held an important executive position; he did not have a great personal love for the city of Toledo; his chief interest was not in politics. Nevertheless, by the time he became mayor, Whitlock had already formed some strong opinions in regard to municipal government and he had thoughtfully considered the attitude of society toward the criminal.

<sup>1</sup>The year 1905 was one of Progressive victories in such boss-ridden cities as Cincinnati and Philadelphia. It was in this year that Wisconsin sent the elder LaFollette to the U. S. Senate.

In Lincoln Steffens' opinion the conclusions Whitlock had reached on these problems by 1905 made him "the most advanced leader in American politics."<sup>2</sup> These ideas were to guide Whitlock's policy as mayor. He had acquired them from his experiences as a reporter and lawyer, from his reading, and from his friendships with men like Jones and John P. Altgeld.

He thought that society often makes criminals by its relentless hostility to men convicted of even the most minor offenses. Often the original offense which condemns a man to a life of crime consists of nothing more than being poor.

He thought "the sovereignty of the people" was a myth. Ours may be a representative government, he would have said, but it is not representative of the people. Our cities are ruled by political machines whose chief concern is party advantage. Party advantage is ordinarily better served by catering to the interests of privilege than by protecting and advancing the interests of the people. As a means of reviving popular self-government in cities Whitlock recommended non-partisan municipal elections, home rule for cities, and municipal ownership of public utilities.

Like Frederic C. Howe, who was two years his senior, Whitlock came from a religious, middle class, Republican family. He was born in 1869 in Urbana, Ohio, where his father was the principal of the high school and later the minister of the Methodist church. His boyhood was spent in the various small towns of northwestern Ohio, in pastorates to which his father was assigned by the annual conference of his church.

Whitlock's first break with family orthodoxy was accomplished at the age of eighteen when he was converted to the Democratic party and the principle of free trade by the Ohio Congressman, Frank Hunt Hurd. To his straight-laced family Hurd seemed only a slightly less demoralizing influence than Robert Ingersoll; and free trade appeared not far removed from atheism.<sup>3</sup> Several years later Hurd helped Whitlock obtain a position as a reporter on the *Chicago Herald*, then the great Democratic newspaper of the Northwest.

The Chicago of the late eighteen eighties and early nineties held for Whitlock the same mixture of fascination and repulsion that it had for other middle-westerners of his generation. Years after leaving the city he could close his eyes and see the sweep of its skyline around the cold lake. The noises of Toledo were to him an echo of the roar of Chicago—

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Brand Whitlock, November 8, 1905, "The Letters of Lincoln Steffens," edited by Ella Winter and Granville Hicks, (New York, 1938), p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Brand Whitlock, "Forty Years of It," (New York, 1914), pp. 29-32.

"that typical city roar . . . the outcry of mankind and brutekind under the stress and strain of modern commercial life . . . ."<sup>4</sup>

His work on the Herald introduced Whitlock to witty and tough-minded young men like Finley Peter Dunne and Charles Seymour. Just as Howe was giving up the provincialism of Meadville for the intellectualism of Johns Hopkins, so Whitlock, at about the same time, was discarding the mores of the parsonage in the bohemian atmosphere of the Whitechapel Club,<sup>5</sup> and taking on sophistication in midnight conversations with his worldly new friends.

The cynicism which Whitlock's work and friends in Chicago developed in him was the kind that more often than not goes hand in hand with idealism. It is an attitude of distrust for the motives of the most respected members of society and of contempt for their hypocrisy. It need not shatter ideals, and often, as in Whitlock's case, only accentuates a fundamental sympathy for the cause of humanity in general.

A friendly article Whitlock wrote about John P. Altgeld during the latter's campaign for Governor of Illinois in 1892 brought him to Altgeld's attention. After Altgeld's election, Whitlock accepted a clerkship in the office of the Secretary of State. Viewed from the standpoint of their contributions to his later development, the four years Whitlock spent in Springfield while holding this position were to be the most educational of his life. Perhaps the hurt caused by the death of his first wife just before he went to Springfield made him particularly sensitive to the influences of these years. They were years of experience and participation in study, friendship, politics, and love. During them Whitlock changed his profession and laid the foundation for his later career. Above all they were years of sympathetic association with a great man in a time of industrial and political strife.

Whitlock's relations with Altgeld encouraged his humanitarian sympathies while hastening his disillusionment with politics. His attitude toward crime and punishment, the rôle of the government in labor disputes, and the activity of businessmen in government, which had been partly formed by his observations as a political reporter, was made definite by his active participation in the events of Altgeld's administration.

It was Whitlock whom Altgeld asked to make out the pardons for the

<sup>4</sup> Whitlock describes his attitude toward Chicago in a letter to Octavia Roberts, August 2, 1898, Allan Nevins, editor, "The Letters of Brand Whitlock," (New York, 1936), pp. 16-17. (Hereafter cited as Nevins, ed., "Letters.")

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the Whitechapel Club and its effect on its members see Elmer Ellis, "Mr. Dooley's America, a Life of Finley Peter Dunne," (New York, 1941), p. 48 *et seq.*

three remaining Haymarket anarchists. A year before the great railroad strike of 1887 Whitlock accompanied the Governor on a trip to investigate a strike on the drainage canal. In "Forty Years of It" Whitlock recalled that in labor disorders his sympathies by impulse had always been on the side of the strikers.<sup>6</sup> Altgeld did not make Whitlock's attitude toward labor but the fact that he looked at labor violence of the eighteen nineties from the viewpoint of the Altgeld administration had the effect of keeping him sympathetic to the workers.

Because of his personal and official relations with the Governor, Whitlock was emotionally and intellectually prepared to understand the systematic opposition to Altgeld of the conservative classes during his administration and in the campaign of 1896. His opinion was that Altgeld's veto of the so-called monopoly bills was a more acute reason for this hostility than was its pretended cause, the pardon of the anarchists.<sup>7</sup> Whitlock long remembered the scenes in the legislature on the closing night of the 1895 session when the public utility lobby made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to pass a bill authorizing the consolidation (*i.e.* monopolization) of the Chicago gas companies over the Governor's veto.<sup>8</sup>

In 1911 Whitlock wrote Vachel Lindsay that he considered Altgeld "the biggest radical of our time."<sup>9</sup> Altgeld had almost certainly been referred to by such a phrase many times before but Whitlock was perhaps the first man to use it with the intention of paying a tribute to a great leader. To him Altgeld was big not only because he had such a sympathy for the underdog but also because he had an intelligent comprehension of the social injustices which produced underdogs and a firm resolution to put an end to them.

Because we are interested in Whitlock as one of the leaders of the civic revival, it is his association with Altgeld that we rightly stress as the most significant aspect of his Springfield years. Meanwhile other events were occurring which were to affect his personal life and literary career.

While in Springfield Whitlock began to take a more than dilettante interest in literature. He was an avid reader of the novels of Howells, Hardy, Tolstoy and Meredith, which were then being published. He

<sup>6</sup> P. 305.

<sup>7</sup> "Forty Years of It," p. 100. Altgeld's veto of the monopoly bill is an important document in the study of the Civic Revival, see John P. Altgeld, "Live Questions," (Chicago, 1899), p. 940.

<sup>8</sup> Whitlock gives a memorable description of this scene in "Forty Years of It," pp. 97-8. Cf. Howe's equally graphic account of the last night of a session of the Ohio legislature, "Confessions of a Reformer," (New York, 1925), pp. 115-16.

<sup>9</sup> Nov. 28, 1911; Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. 145. Lindsay's poem about Altgeld, "The Eagle That Is Forgotten," is dated 1913.

wrote, rewrote, revised, and tore up stories of his own composition. In Octavia Roberts he found a congenial friend with whom he could discuss the books he was reading and to whom he could express his personal literary ambitions. The law studies he pursued in the office of Senator John M. Palmer were apparently undertaken in the hope that the legal profession would afford more leisure for serious writing than had journalism.

Whitlock's marriage to Ella Brainerd, the sister of his first wife, came in the midst of these happy years. There is no mention of her in his book of reminiscences, "Forty Years of It," and perhaps because he was so seldom separated from her, there are no letters addressed to her in his printed correspondence. No reader of these letters, however, can leave them without having glimpsed occasional vignettes of "Nell" happily sketched for us by her husband. We see Nell having a good time in a cloudburst; Nell laughing at the Supreme Court Justices; and Nell, growing older, ruing the day she had worked for woman suffrage. The portrait we get when we put all the sketches together is one of an understanding woman, full alike of sympathy and raillery, and indispensable to her husband's comfort and peace of mind.

## II

WHITLOCK LEFT SPRINGFIELD early in 1897. After some indecision and not without considerable misgivings he chose Toledo as a more promising city than Chicago in which to attempt to build up a law practice. He entered the legal profession for reasons of convenience rather than love, for his chief interest was in literature. At least in the early years of his practice in Toledo the expectation that law would provide ample opportunity for writing was realized. While he sat in his office waiting for clients to search him out Whitlock wrote his first important novel, "The 13th District," a story of Illinois politics.

To the practice of law Whitlock brought a mind quick to see injustice and a heart ready to feel it. By temperament he was as little suited to law as he was to politics. Although a bookish man, he was not an intellectual one and, while cultured and well read, his education, largely self-acquired, was not of the sort to give him either a reverence for law or an appreciation of the philosophical and historical bases of its institutions. On the other hand, all the influences which he had felt since adolescence acted to make him impatient with the absurdity and cruelty of legal procedure and precedent. In such a doctrine as "proximate cause," a scholar would see tradition, and a shyster or a corporation lawyer would see a

loophole. Whitlock saw only human suffering denied relief because of a senseless technicality.

What interest Whitlock had in his profession was confined to its most human branch—criminal law. Just as it was his emotional belief in Jones that later carried him into politics, so it was his emotional sympathy for criminals that dominated his legal career. He eventually established his legal reputation by acting as counsel for the defense in several widely-discussed murder trials. His concern for criminals went back at least as far as his Chicago days. The total effect of his experiences there had been to lessen his regard for respectable people and to deepen his pity for unfortunate ones.

Observation of the haphazard working of the police courts in Chicago made him doubt the justice of the treatment of criminals. A discussion of the execution of the anarchists opened his eyes to the possibility that an unjust thing could be done in a legal way. In Springfield his work with Altgeld and a long-remembered conversation with Clarence Darrow convinced him that society more often makes people do bad things than God does. By bringing him into intimate contact with many kinds of criminals his law practice in Toledo made him feel the human-ness of criminals. Whitlock believed that when you understand a thief or a murderer, when you have heard him laugh and talk and cry, he ceases to be a "criminal" to you and becomes simply a man or woman who has done something wrong.

If we say that Whitlock was sentimental about criminals, we must remember that he actually knew a great number of people who were in trouble with the law and, knowing them, felt that they were not very different from you and me. Whitlock could not forget that, when criminals are executed or imprisoned, it is humans who are being killed and denied liberty, not a separate and exotic species of beings.

He did not deny the existence of a class that makes its living by habitual disobedience to law but his theory was that society is partially responsible for the creation of this class. Our economic system does not provide opportunity for all of its members; our courts punish people for poverty (as when a man is sentenced to the workhouse for "vagrancy" or for inability to pay a fine); and our hostility toward anyone once convicted of any offense makes it impossible for him to be anything but a criminal.

### III

AN UNFORTUNATE EXPERIENCE Whitlock met with early in his legal career climaxed his growing disbelief in the possibility of securing justice by legal action.

One day a pretty German girl came into his office with a sad tale of her husband's neglect. Whitlock had the husband imprisoned for non-support. Then he helped the girl obtain a divorce. The very day after the divorce was awarded she married a man who had been one of the chief witnesses against the husband in his trial for non-support. Their affair, discovered by the first husband, had been the blow that so upset him that he started to drink and failed to provide for his family.<sup>10</sup>

Whitlock, who had been unaware of this angle of the case, began to wonder if all our attempts to do justice are not as futile as this particularly clumsy attempt to find a human solution to a very human problem through recourse to a bored judge, wrangling lawyers, dusty law books, and listless jurors. He resolved never again to prosecute anyone for anything.

In the gentle writings of William Dean Howells he had already discovered an appealing suggestion that, where human beings are concerned, the humble goal of mercy is a wiser end to aim at than the stern one of justice. Howells had written: "It seems best to be very careful how we try to do justice in this world, and mostly to leave retribution of all kinds to God, who really knows about things; and content ourselves as much as possible with mercy, whose mistakes are not as irreparable."<sup>11</sup>

Whitlock made this sentiment the theme of his most ambitious novel, "The Turn of the Balance."

"The Turn of the Balance" tells the story of Archie Koerner, one of the weak products of our social system. Archie returned to his home city after service in the Spanish-American War. Without education and unprepared for any trade, he found it impossible to obtain work. After the excitement of army life, the atmosphere of his home seemed dull. Looking for excitement, he fell in with a gang of petty thieves. Soon he had been convicted of a minor theft and was sentenced to the workhouse for a year. Upon his release Archie discovered that society did not look upon his crime as paid for but that the stigma of ex-convict made all respectable men avoid him. The only people who befriended him and treated him naturally were criminals. With all honest ways to make a living seemingly closed to him (for remember, Archie was weak), he drifted into a career of crime. Eventually he killed a policeman whose persecution of him literally drove him to it. For this murder he was executed.

<sup>10</sup> Whitlock recalls this domestic tragi-comedy in "Forty Years of It," pp. 105-9.

<sup>11</sup> William Dean Howells, "A Boy's Town," (New York, 1890), p. 74.

Whitlock told a friend that "The Turn of the Balance" represented ten years of suffering for criminals on his part, and that it took four years to plan and two and one-half to write it.<sup>12</sup> He intended it to be an indictment of the conventional attitude toward criminals. He hoped to show in a specific case just how society can make a criminal. He believed, perhaps, that the query raised in the last chapter, "does the one crime consist in being poor?" might make people realize how much like ordinary mortals criminals are.

How bruising to him, then, must have been the reception of the book. Some critics found fault with it because the story was depressing; others, equally oblivious to the points Whitlock had tried so hard to make clear, saw in it only a routine protest against injustice in the administration of criminal law; and at least one reviewer attempted to judge the book on the basis of whether or not the pictures of prison life found in it were accurate.<sup>13</sup> This is an example of the kind of misunderstanding that sometimes deflated Whitlock's idealism and eventually made him despair of the possibility of any rapid improvement in the human race.

No matter how disillusioned Whitlock might become about mankind in general, he never lost his sympathy for criminals. In 1904 Ohio passed an act drafted by Whitlock which provided for the establishment of juvenile courts.<sup>14</sup> He hoped that out of the juvenile courts would evolve courts for grown-up delinquents for, as he wrote Judge Ben Lindsey, "I think that most of the so-called criminals are merely grown-up children . . ."<sup>15</sup>

For years he carried on what he called a guerilla warfare against capital punishment. One of the constitutional amendments submitted to the Ohio electorate in 1912 provided for the abolition of capital punishment. Although the amendment was not ratified by the state as a whole, Whitlock had the satisfaction of seeing it approved by a three to one vote in his county, Lucas.<sup>16</sup>

It was characteristic of him that one of the few compensations he found for the unpleasant aspects of his duties as mayor was the increased pres-

<sup>12</sup> Letter to William C. Bobbs, June 6, 1906; Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> On the whole the book drew a favorable, if not very understanding, press. See Whitlock's defense of the book in a letter to Laurence Chambers, March 15, 1907, Nevins, ed., "Letters," pp. 69-76.

<sup>14</sup> Whitlock states that he drafted the act in a letter to William Allen White, April 8, 1908, *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>15</sup> June 3, 1907, *ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> For Whitlock's attitude toward capital punishment see his letters to William C. Bobbs, Feb. 1, 1906, *ibid.*, p. 49; M. P. Christensen, Oct. 1, 1912, *ibid.*, 155. Also see his pamphlet, "Thou Shalt Not Kill."



tige his official position gave his numerous letters requesting clemency for prisoners in whose cases he was interested.<sup>17</sup>

## IV

IF WHITLOCK'S RELATIONS with Altgeld were the most important influences in shaping his attitude toward criminal, industrial, and political problems in his youth, his friendship with Samuel M. Jones was of equal importance in determining the path he would follow in his early maturity. Jones' personal example and the appeal of his political and social philosophy revived Whitlock's interest in politics; a feeling of compulsion to carry on the work Jones had begun swept Whitlock into an active rôle in politics; and the conviction he had in the truth of the ideas Jones had fought for kept Whitlock fighting for them after his every other impulse made him long to quit.

The two men met when Jones strode into Whitlock's office and asked him to speak at one of the Sunday afternoon meetings in Golden Rule Park. Their common sympathy for criminals was what brought them together but they soon discovered they shared the same attitude toward many other questions. In particular they had a liking for the same kind of books and both liked to talk about what they had read. Jones was reading Tolstoy; Whitlock was reading the other great Russians. Both were enthusiastic about Whitman. Jones, older but more exuberant than Whitlock, would call him up to read lines which he thought especially good.

His friendship with the mayor occasionally enabled Whitlock to put some of his liberal ideas into practice. When the police court judge was out of town Jones would depute Whitlock to act in his place. On such occasions Jones and Whitlock could usually find some excuse to let the culprits go free. It really did no harm, Whitlock dryly observed, because everybody they let go was usually back in court again in a few days.

They also worked out a plan to insure careful trials for persons charged with minor offenses who, under ordinary circumstances, would not have been able to afford legal advice. Jones paid the expenses incident to their trials (such as stenographers' fees) and Whitlock took care of their cases in court.

For instance, Whitlock would demand a jury trial for a girl arrested as a street walker. When her case was given as much attention as that customarily lavished on the defense of a well-to-do person, convictions

<sup>17</sup> See letter to Louis B. Houck, June 16, 1906, Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. 62.

were not so frequent or easy and Whitlock noticed that the police became a little more careful in the matter of arrests.

One thing the activities of Jones and Whitlock accomplished was the breaking up of the practice of indiscriminate arrests for "suspicion." Under the prodding of Whitlock's sarcasm, juries were not slow to realize the absurdity of allowing the police to make criminals of people by merely suspecting them of unnamed crimes.<sup>18</sup>

His work as a kind of unofficial public defender provided Whitlock with much of the material he used in "The Turn of the Balance" and at least part of the philosophy of the book (as in the suggestion that being poor is the only crime society punishes) is traceable to Jones' influence on him.

Until he met Jones, Whitlock was neither particularly satisfied with his life in Toledo nor much concerned about the affairs of the city.<sup>19</sup> The defeat of Altgeld for re-election in 1896 together with what Whitlock regarded as the betrayal of the Democrats by the Senate leaders of the party in the Wilson-Gorman tariff act had given him a distaste for politics which, try as he might, he never completely overcame.

But the politics of Golden Rule Jones were different from those of Sangamon County, Illinois. Whitlock's personal affection for the mayor and his admiration for the fight he was making against the privileged and puritanical elements of the city were undoubtedly most responsible for making him resume his old interest in politics.

The chief practical service Whitlock rendered Jones was his preparation of the city's case against the constitutionality of an act passed by the State Legislature which removed the Toledo Police Department from the control of the mayor.<sup>20</sup> Important as this case is in the history of the Civic Revival, it has a special significance in the career of Brand Whitlock. He credited the study he devoted to the preparation of the brief for the case with having awakened his interests in the problems of municipal government and impressed upon him the necessity of obtaining home rule for cities.

Meanwhile Jones' creed of non-partisanism was rekindling Whitlock's faith in the possibility of achieving social reforms through political action. Jones persuaded him that the root of our trouble with politics is

<sup>18</sup> Whitlock describes the work he and Jones did on behalf of criminals in "Forty Years of It," pp. 119-22.

<sup>19</sup> See his letters to Octavia Roberts, Aug. 2, 1898, Nevins, ed., "Letters," pp. 15-20, for a picture of his early attitude toward Toledo.

<sup>20</sup> *The State of Ohio ex rel. Knisley et al. v. Jones, et al.*, 66 Ohio State 453.

not the faithless politician but the too faithful voter. The man who always votes the straight ticket, who casts a "regular" vote for any question that is made a partisan issue, is the stuff of which political machines are made; and it is through the machine that privilege fastens its control upon the city. Real home rule, government actually representative of the people of the community, will be impossible until the people cut themselves loose from their blind allegiance to party and make their own decisions. With home rule and independent voting the people will be in a position to attack and solve their problems.<sup>21</sup>

Jones and Whitlock believed that the non-partisan spirit would first assert itself on the city level. They felt that the Toledo election results, especially the re-election of Jones in 1903, indicated the triumph of the non-partisan idea in that city. In the 1903 campaign, even though denied access to the newspapers, Jones was still able to carry his message directly to the people. Whitlock was with him when he opened his fight for re-election with a meeting on a windy downtown street corner. Every night during the campaign Whitlock rode from meeting to meeting with Jones in a little buggy drawn by Jones' white mare.

In their political speeches he and Jones confined themselves to discussions of local issues such as law enforcement problems and the franchise question. However, both men were able to present these issues in such a way that they promoted widespread speculation among the people about the right of society to punish individuals, about the difference between law and statute, and about the fundamentals of representative government.<sup>22</sup>

After Jones' death in 1904, men like Negley D. Cochran (editor of the *News-Bee*) and Elisha B. Southard organized the Independent party to keep alive the opposition of many former Jones supporters to the Republican machine and the street car company. Meanwhile in weekly speeches at Golden Rule Park Whitlock was striving equally hard to keep alive the spirit of tolerance and intellectual inquiry which Jones had imparted to the movement he had begun. His task was to encourage independent voting by making independent thinkers. Like Jones he carried the fight beyond

<sup>21</sup> For Whitlock's statement of the non-partisan doctrine see his article "The Evil Influence of National Parties and Issues in Municipal Elections," *Proceedings . . . of the National Municipal League*, 1907, pp. 192-208.

<sup>22</sup> Whitlock discusses his part in the election of 1903 in "Forty Years of It," pp. 126-35. For Jones' account of it see "The Non-Partisan in Politics," *The Independent*, LV, pp. 1963-6 (Aug. 20, 1903). The significance of this election is examined by a sympathetic outsider in B. O. Flower, "Two Notable Reform Victories in Ohio," *The Arena*, XXIX, pp. 651-5 (June 1903).

the political machines and the public utility companies to the prejudices within human minds and hearts.

The impetus that Jones had given the non-partisan cause in Toledo was such that the Independent movement would have gone on even without Whitlock, but without him it would have lost some of its deeper implications. Whitlock's special contribution to the movement was that during the eight years of his administration he succeeded in maintaining the undercurrent of humanitarian and philosophical radicalism which makes the Toledo phase of the Civic Revival a unique American political movement.

Whitlock was reluctant to accept the Independent nomination for mayor in 1905 because his ambitions lay in another field. Not the least of the odds he had to face while mayor was his own dislike of the job. Three months after his election he was tired of the mayoralty.<sup>23</sup> The nagging criticism that was constantly directed at him and the political manipulations, "deals," and squabbles in which even the Independents indulged made the eight years of his mayoralty difficult and alien and trying to him.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes he got so tired he wanted to run away. "I feel as though I should like to take a train on the longest railroad in the world and go to the end of that line, and then go as far as I could by vehicle and horseback, and then walk five hundred miles farther into the wilderness and lie down, just to get away and rest."<sup>25</sup> The point is, of course, that he didn't run away as long as he felt that he had anything left to give to the Independent Movement.

Even when he escaped to the convenient wilderness of Michigan for a short summer holiday his thoughts turned back to the tired men and women and their dirty children sweating in hot Toledo.<sup>26</sup> Some strain of his puritan ancestors uniting with his own altruistic impulses, made him persist in the work until, discouraged and drained of enthusiasm, he knew that his usefulness to Toledo was gone.

His resentment against politics was accentuated by the fact that his duties as mayor left him little time for writing. The job became unbearable when the conviction seized him that the exhaustion produced by the irritating cares of office was destroying the artist in him. With a sense of

<sup>23</sup> See Whitlock's letter to Meredith Nicholson, March 29, 1906, Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Whitlock expresses his dislike of politics in "Forty Years of It," pp. 350-5. For a good statement of his attitude towards the mayoralty see his letter to Octavia Roberts, July 20, 1909, 116-18.

<sup>25</sup> Whitlock to Clarence Darrow, Nov. 22, 1907, Nevins, ed., Letters," p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> See Whitlock's poem, "At a Summer Resort," *The American Magazine*, LXXII, p. 273, (July 1911).

relief he grasped at the offer of an appointment to a diplomatic post made to him by President Wilson in 1913. The position of United States Minister to Belgium promised him an opportunity to resume his literary activities.

He was so humanly anxious to receive the appointment and so understandably disgusted by the break-up of the Independent party that he refused to jeopardize his chances for confirmation by the Senate by endorsing either of the Independent candidates for mayor in 1913.<sup>27</sup> The joker was that hardly had he established himself in Brussels when all dreams of writing were smashed by the coming of the World War. The "ironic spirit" Whitlock admired in the novels of Thomas Hardy had entered his life too.

## V

TO UNDERSTAND WHITLOCK we must remember that throughout his mature life he was haunted by a feeling that he had accomplished nothing of importance in the field in which he wished to excel. His one serious ambition was to write great novels. Political service and success did not compensate him for his failure to satisfy his gnawing personal desire for literary achievement.

In a letter written to Octavia Roberts in 1899 he expressed his intention to write books portraying life in the two theatres he knew best—the political world and the central Ohio country.<sup>28</sup> Ten years later, on the eve of his fortieth birthday, he was appalled at the insignificance of his contributions to literature.<sup>29</sup>

The sense of lack of accomplishment in the work he felt he was best fitted to do recurs in a letter written after the World War: he had ideas for half a dozen books which seemed to need only the physical labor of writing, "and yet here I am at fifty-one with none of this work accomplished. All that I have done in that field, so pitifully small and inadequate, has been done at the fag-end of days that various necessities compelled me to devote to other ends. . . ."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Whitlock explained the reasons for his refusal to be a candidate for re-election in 1913 in a letter to Negley D. Cochran, May 6, 1913; Nevins, ed., "Letters," pp. 166-67. In the campaign of 1913 the Independent party broke into wings. Whitlock refused to endorse the candidate of either faction. In a confidential letter written to a friend in 1939 Cochran stated that he asked Whitlock to support the more liberal of the candidates. Whitlock declined for fear of angering Ohio's Senator Atlee Pomerene, who was a friend of the other Independent candidate.

<sup>28</sup> June 27, 1899, Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Octavia Roberts, Feb. 28, 1909, *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>30</sup> To Trumbull White, Oct. 10, 1920, *ibid.*, p. 319.

At one time Whitlock planned to write a history of the radical movement in America; he had an idea for a political novel centering around the career of a mayor; a long-cherished project, which had to wait until after the war to be written, was a study of the survival of puritanism in Ohio.<sup>31</sup>

First the law, then the duties of the mayor's office, and finally his pressing responsibilities as American Minister to German-occupied Belgium interfered with his desire to write. Only after the war did he have a chance to devote himself entirely to literature and then poor health often interrupted his work.

Howe and Whitlock, products of similar environments and sharing identical viewpoints on many questions were yet two entirely different personalities. Howe had by far the better formal education; Whitlock the more intellectual family background. Howe's chief character trait was dogged honesty; Whitlock's was compassion.

Whitlock had the greater sensitivity and keener intuition of the two. It took years of actual experience with reality to make Howe give up all of his earlier beliefs but the bottom was knocked out of Whitlock's youthful complacency during his brief term as a reporter.

Howe's life, like that of Lincoln Steffens, whose writings associate his career with the Civic Revival, was a continual education. Despite his real accomplishments in politics and diplomacy, Whitlock's mental development was a reluctant progression towards disillusionment. Howe's approach to life was rational; Steffens' was curious; and Whitlock's was emotional.

Howe began life with a set of intellectual prepossessions which he discarded one by one as experience proved them false. Through association with great men early in life Whitlock began with aroused humanitarian sympathies. His work with criminals and unfortunates deepened these sympathies. Looking at the world through eyes frankly prejudiced by his emotions, Whitlock was filled with love and pity for humanity and its suffering. From the very beginning, however, and increasingly as he grew older, Whitlock was hurt, exasperated, and depressed by the world's stolidity and conservatism.

Whitlock's good friend, Newton D. Baker, has pointed out that Whitlocks' literary tastes are a good index to his personality.<sup>32</sup> They also reveal his deeper attitude toward politics. Like Jones, Whitlock preferred "the

<sup>31</sup> "J. Hardin & Son," published in 1923.

<sup>32</sup> "Introduction," Nevins, ed., "Letters," p. x.

literature that dealt fundamentally with life." From his early allegiance to William Dean Howells he turned to Thomas Hardy. Perhaps he hoped to do for Ohio what Hardy had done for Wessex. But Whitlock's chief enthusiasm was saved for the great Russian novelists. Baker, who was one of the men with whom Whitlock liked to discuss literature, says of the Russians that they delineated human nature in the nude. They wrote about the humankind Whitlock was thinking of when he spoke of "the people."

Whitlock carried his love for humanity into politics. He was so keenly aware of the complexity of human nature and of what Hardy called "the contrariety of things" that he distrusted any hard and fast creed or program. He was so conscious of the presence of the human element in every problem that he was repelled by force. People were the only reality to him.

In his opposition to force and distrust of dogma, Whitlock was like the other leaders of the Civic Revival. In the quality of his belief in people he differed from the others, being closest to Jones. He assumed that people, whatever they are today, will some day be good. He was aroused when he thought the ordinary man was unfairly treated. But what really stirred Whitlock about people was the simple fact of their humanity. They were all men and so all deserving of respect and pity. In Whitlock pity was a stronger emotion than respect.

Whitlock arrived at his belief in people by a different route than Johnson or Jones or Howe. The first two, having satisfied their personal competitive urges by success in business, were wrenched out of their old lives and thrust into service, one by a tremendous personal experience, the other by an overpowering conviction in the truth of a philosophy. Howe's release from the evangelical psychology of his youth gave him an intellectual and emotional stimulus. His understanding of the industrial system made him a humanitarian. Whitlock was first of all a humanitarian.

Without having achieved his artistic ambition he was turned into a radical in politics and economics because his sympathy for criminals made him see that many criminals are only poor. That is, his faith in people—the only faith he had—was based on sympathy rather than conviction. Sometimes, because he was a sensitive man, his belief in people was shaken. By the end of his life any hope that he may once have cherished that men would soon become wiser was dulled. Human prejudice had proved a tougher antagonist than privilege.

We must realize Whitlock's disillusion, but it would be wrong to over-emphasize it. Perhaps he only expressed his disappointment in life more

eloquently than other men.<sup>33</sup> In considering Whitlock as one of the leaders of the Civic Revival we should notice that few men as sensitive as he have ever gone into politics; few practical men have been as successful as he in handling difficult jobs. Whitlock applied in politics the humanity he was so long denied a chance to express in novels.

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<sup>33</sup> "Sometimes we grow sick and tired of it, Nell and I. . . . I grow homesick, especially in these autumn days; but down in my heart I know it isn't home, or any given place I'm homesick for, it's youth. What a terrible thing to grow old. Ugh!" Whitlock to Octavia Roberts, Oct. 31, 1932, *ibid.*, pp. 533-34.

### *Land Settlement in Dutch New Guinea*

TWO ASSOCIATIONS have issued an invitation for inquiries to all those interested in settling in Dutch New Guinea, according to a report from Batavia, Java. The associations have circulated questionnaires to prospective settlers. They report great interest in their plan, with 9,000 persons in Soerabaja alone having requested questionnaires and a large number of them having returned the forms with answers. New Guinea has not yet been fully explored and there are signs that it offers a great scope for development, according to the associations. It is reported that many dissatisfied Dutchmen feel the urge to engage anew in colonizing and will accept the offer of the two associations to help them settle on the island.

It is rather a remarkable thing how quickly people understand the opportunity that awaits them when they are offered land on some colonial frontier. It is equally remarkable how slow they are to grasp the fact that the greatest opportunity lies in "internal colonization," in settlement on land within the borders of civilized and industrially developed society. It may be, of course, that they are not at all slow to grasp this fact, but that they also realize the tremendous institutional obstacles to internal colonization, obstacles which keep much land under-improved and some land, even, unimproved.

W.L.