

# The Great Bigotry Merger

By CHARLES P. SWEENEY

THANKS to the New York *World*, the country has been informed in a general way of the organization of the Great American Fraternity. Newspaper readers know by this time that the circle of master bigots who developed the Ku Klux Klan, sensing the possibilities of a political application of masked terrorism, have developed a super-organization of haters, aiming to combine the membership of a dozen different groups and committed to the proposition that this shall be a free country for all except Roman Catholics; Jews, Negroes, persons born in foreign countries, and progressive and liberal-minded Americans even if they fall into the otherwise persecution-exempt class of "native, white, Protestant." Already the Klan has been denounced by the leading Masons of the country for an unwarranted linking of the Masonic Fraternity with the Ku Klux in the prospectus of the new organization. But this means nothing to its promoters. They will proceed through the country organizing towns, cities, counties, and States.

Before pooh-poohing the new possibility it is well to consider the recent history of the Klan. The *World's* exposure so advertised the organization that although it lost many of the better members it added a large following of riff-raff, and the Klan is now capitalizing the failure of the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives to report on its investigation.

In twenty-seven States the Klan has made nearly 200 public appearances in hoods in the last ten months. Most of these appearances have been at churches, charitable meetings, or rallies for the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, etc. Invariably gifts of money or Bibles or flags have been made. Masked men have also turned up at numerous funerals, strewn flowers upon the coffin, and dispersed. All this is pure bidding for publicity. But it is significant that the gifts to churches and to charity have been most numerous where the Klan outrages have been most flagrant. Thus, in Texas eighty-seven visitations of Christian charity have been paraded before the people.

In Texas the Ku Klux Klan has become the instrument of a new Negro enslavement, for it is employed in forcing black men to work and pick cotton at rates they would not accept if the decision were left to themselves. Throughout the South and Southwest the Negro population lives in constant fear of the hooded bands of night-riders. Everywhere, South, North, East, and West, where the Klan has planted the fiery cross of the Invisible Empire, Roman Catholics and Jews are the intended targets, while on the Pacific Coast the Japanese are included among the objects of 100 per cent American vigilance.

The law may as well not exist. It is flouted and laughed at. In States where Klan organization has reached its highest point the administrators themselves are Klansmen. Murders, kidnappings, floggings, threats—they are almost daily occurrences. But a judge who denounces the night-riding mobs is the exception. A sheriff, Bob Buchanan, at Waco, Texas, with courage enough to stop a masked parade and demand the names of the paraders, is shot and then made the victim of removal proceedings sponsored by the most influential citizens of his county. A Klansman,

in Birmingham, Alabama, who kills a Catholic priest in cold blood on his own doorstep is acquitted at the "trial" amidst the plaudits of the mob. A city council in the same "Birmingham the Beautiful," considering an ordinance forbidding masked parades on the public streets, is terrorized in its own chamber into defeating the measure. Members of a board of education in Atlanta, Georgia, demurring at voting for a resolution to dismiss all Catholics employed as public school teachers, receive letters threatening their lives. A mayor in Columbus, Georgia, who refuses to remove a city manager who has proved efficient and capable finds his home dynamited; the city manager, "a blue-bellied Yankee," is driven from the city. A Roman Catholic church, at Naperville, Illinois, is destroyed by an incendiary fire two hours after a monster Klan midnight initiation in the neighborhood.

E. Y. Clarke, Mrs. Bessie Tyler, and William Joseph Simmons have capitalized ignorance, hatred, and violence in the United States. They have learned to sell hatred and Clarke and Mrs. Tyler have grown rich in the business. As for Clarke himself, he would quit today if Mrs. Tyler would let him. But he is afraid. Whither he goes he is guarded by so-called detectives employed and directed by Fred L. Savage, master strike-breaker, whose last address was Pier 25, North River, New York, from which he marshaled the strong-arms intended to break the longshore strike of 1920. Savage's rise in the Klan has been phenomenal. He went to Atlanta last August at the behest of Clarke and Mrs. Tyler. He soon became Chief of Investigation. In May last when Clarke managed to send Simmons away for a six months "vacation," Clarke became Vice Imperial Wizard, in addition to being Imperial Kleagle; and Savage was made Chief of Operations, a new job, which Clarke announced was "third in command," but, since Simmons has never been but nominally first in command, Savage is today second in command of that army of cross-bearing patriots, the K.K.K. And but for one circumstance is Mrs. Tyler, the Ku Klux Empress. In this woman beats the real heart of Ku Klux today, as it did yesterday and will tomorrow.

If there are fools in the K.K.K. Mrs. Tyler is not one of them. She knew better than any one else what Ku Kluxism was leading to, but she was and is willing to chance the consequences so long as Ku Kluxism continues to pay so handsomely. She has a positive genius for executive direction. Her courage is a thing to admire. When Clarke, terrified by the nationwide newspaper assault on the Klan and the impending Congressional investigation last September, wrote his resignation and sent it to the newspapers at eleven o'clock on a Saturday night, Mrs. Tyler, hearing of it in half an hour, could not contain her rage. She called up the correspondents, denounced Clarke as "weak-kneed," declared she would never quit, and in forty-eight hours had injected sufficient starch into his spine to permit him to sit up straight in a chair and sign his name to a document withdrawing his resignation.

It is nearly a year since Mrs. Tyler told the writer that the fight on the Klan was bound to result in a religious

war in America. She meant, of course, that the K.K.K., so long as she exercised an influence over its ostensible leaders, was going to "carry on" and that she anticipated that adverse publicity would arouse opposition sufficient in volume and bitterness to bring civil strife to various sections of the country. As a matter of fact the first idea of Simmons, Clarke, and Mrs. Tyler did not comprehend selling anti-Catholicism. They believed the phrase "white supremacy" to be the mainspring of the promotion, at least in the South—and they did not dream in the beginning of anything but a purely Southern organization. But the face of things changed as one after another of the Atlantans who believe the Pope to be the head of a conspiracy to unseat Congress and toss the President into the Potomac were admitted into the mysteries of Klannishness. Indeed, they changed the Klan so completely that in some States it is not considered anything but a straight anti-Catholic organization, as for instance Oregon, where, in Portland, but a few months ago the Klan initiation was held in the Municipal Auditorium by permission of the city authorities. The result of the Republican primary elections in that State, fought on a straight Klan versus Catholicism basis and lost by the outspoken Klan candidates by less than 500 votes, attests the strength the weird order has gained in the Northwest.

Believers of the statements that the Klan does not interfere with the rights of the individual or with the processes of law will be enlightened by an address by J. G. Camp, a duly authorized Kleagle and Klan lecturer at Yazoo, Mississippi. On February 26, 1922, he said: "The Klan is, in a way, a great detective agency and gathers evidence against offenders. Then at a Klan Klonklave the offender is tried by the Klansmen and a committee appointed to see the offender and attempt by gentle persuasion to make him see the error of his ways. If that fails the offender is reported to the officers and the officers told to prosecute him or get out of office."

From the South and Southeast reports have come that the Klan is on both sides of the prohibition question. In one section Klansmen manifest a determination to drive out all bootleggers, as for instance in Wilson, Oklahoma, in January last, when Klansmen attempted to banish Joe Carrol, a reputed bootlegger, who pulled his gun and fired, killing two Klansmen, and then received a fatal bullet himself.

In Georgia, the Klan is generally regarded as the protecting arm of the bootlegger, the regulator of men who do not live with their wives, and the arch-enemy of Catholics in politics. In Texas the Klan is likewise very anti-Catholic, very moral, and very wet. In Texas and Colorado fearless judges have held that the Klan oath is an impediment to justice. Judge Robert Street at Beaumont, Texas, removed Tom Garner, sheriff of Jefferson County, on the ground that his Klan oath was in contravention of his oath of office. In Colorado it was held that witnesses who refused to answer questions because it would violate their Klan oath were in contempt of court, and three Klansmen were jailed; also when the Klan threatened death to Governor Shoup's Negro messenger unless he left the State, and by threats did succeed in driving from the State another reputable Negro citizen, the State authorities refused a charter to the order.

In their statements to the press, nevertheless, Simmons and Clarke continue to insist that the Klan is not governed

by bigotry or prejudice and that it is not anti-Catholic. There is a volume of proof to refute this, but hardly more is needed than these excerpts from an address by Simmons, himself, to the Junior Order of United American Mechanics in Atlanta on April 30, last, as published in the *Searchlight*, organ of the Ku Klux Klan and the leading journalistic proponent of the Great American Fraternity:

Right here within our own borders, the great and mighty city of Boston, which tries to lay claim that it is the cradle of America (tries is all it can do), and holds itself up as the paragon of American principles, has, if my information is correct, seventeen schools in which the English language is never spoken, and not an English thought or an American ideal. These schools are for the children of French-Canadians who have come across the border and each of these schools are under the domination of a foreign potentate who is in nowise sympathetic with American ideals and institutions. Right here in our own land twenty-one towns in the State of Connecticut are under the domination and control of the Italian-Dago influence. Then you hear folks talk about "we Americans," and of America as the melting-pot where the stamp and impress of all nations can come in and shape our destinies. It is no such thing. It is a garbage can! Not a melting-pot. . . . My friends, your government can be changed between the rising and the setting of one sun. This great nation, with all it provides, can be snatched away from you in the space of one day, and that day no more than ten hours. When the hordes of aliens walk to the ballot box and their votes outnumber yours, then that alien horde has got you by the throat. . . . Americans will awake from their slumber and rush out for battle and there will be such stir as the world has never seen the like. The soil of America will run with the blood of its people.

In this same address the Colonel, who before Congress denied that he or the Klan held anti-Negro prejudices, said:

All these folks of color can take their place—they had better take it and stay in it when they get in it. This is a white man's civilization and we are the instrumentalities for the preservation thereof and the protection of that which was created by years of devotion, which has given to the world the open Bible, the little red school house, if you please, the great public-school system, all those things which have come to us through years of devout thought and hard work as a sacred heritage. . . . Men tell me that the Negroes in this State, and I am not now-going outside the State of Georgia, are paying their poll taxes for as far back as fourteen years and qualifying to vote. . . . I am informed that every buck nigger in Atlanta who attains the age of twenty-one years has gotten the money to pay his poll tax and register, and that 6,000 of them are now ready to vote, and that these apes are going to line up at the polls, mixed up there with white men and white women. Lord forgive me, but that is the most sickening and disgusting sight you ever saw. (Loud applause.) You've got to change that. . . . Keep the Negro and the other fellow where he belongs. They have got no part in our political or social life. If in one, he will get into the other.

These words of the Imperial Wizard of the Invisible Empire are mild, indeed conservative, when compared with the violence of Carl F. Hutcheson, Atlanta school commissioner, J. O. Wood, editor of the *Searchlight*, or Walter Sims, Atlanta city councilman and Klan candidate for mayor. The first two of these are the principal promoters of the Great American Fraternity, and Hutcheson's law partner, J. A. Morris, is president. With their confreres they actually induced the Klan to boycott a certain brand of cigarettes (Camels) because they are made by a concern reputed to be controlled by Thomas Fortune Ryan, a Catholic. They have attempted to intimidate the Atlanta board of education into dismissing all of the Roman Catholics

employed as school teachers, to influence employers to dismiss their Roman Catholic workers, and to boycott merchants who display Roman Catholic sympathies. Wood, a Klan candidate for the legislature in Georgia, has chosen as a leading plank in his platform a more rigid inspection of convents and institutions conducted by religious orders. The Klan, several weeks ago, succeeded in effecting the dismissal of a school principal in El Paso, Texas, because she is a Catholic. This writer is in possession of first-hand information concerning a conference between several of these fanatics, in which Clarke, perceiving the salability of anti-Catholic activities, proposed the very plan now revealed under the title the Great American Fraternity. It is interesting to add that at a similar conference, sometime previous, Clarke worked up his hearers with a declaration that when the Klan influence flowered its leaders would aim at the sterilization of all male Negro children so that the Negro would gradually disappear from the American Continent. It is equally interesting that Negroes are joining the Catholic church for self-protection.

Clarke denies he is back of the Great American Fraternity. Nevertheless the idea is his. And this is the idea:

1. To organize a nationwide sales organization composed of members of thirteen secret orders popularly believed to be hostile to the Catholic church.

2. To instruct these salesmen in the business of selling effective political anti-Catholicism to their brothers in their respective lodges. This is in line with the system adopted by Clarke in 1920 for putting over the Ku Klux. At that time Clarke suddenly realized the value of representing the Klan to be "the fighting brother" of Masonry. So he issued orders that none but men with Masonic affiliations should be employed as Kleagles, or salesmen, although Clarke himself is not a Mason and it is well understood that he could not get into the order.

3. To find political issues, based on opposition to the Catholic church and to Catholics, upon which all of the thirteen secret societies might unite in a given city, county, or State.

This idea is now a realized fact. Hutcheson and Wood, law partners until recently, had the Great American Fraternity incorporated in Georgia and set the price of membership at \$5, payable in advance upon application. The only other requirement is that the applicant produce evidence that he is a member in good standing of one or another of the thirteen organizations. The fact that the most prominent Masons of the country, as well as officials of the Orangemen, have repudiated the plot as anti-American does not worry the promoters. They are out to unite in a single group of haters all the haters in the country, as may be gleaned from the following statement of the Great American Fraternity, appearing in the *Searchlight*, organ of the Ku Klux Klan, for June 10, 1922 (when it appeared, for the moment, that the Klan candidates had won the Oregon primary election):

What has happened in Oregon will come sooner or later in every State. The enemies of American institutions, boasting of unification and commanded by a potentate situated in a foreign land, have been overthrown. . . . What will the hostile hosts think when they find themselves opposed by the Great American Fraternity throughout the land? Already INTENSIVELY one hundred per cent American as to its each individual member, this great organization is binding together the properly qualified members in good standing of the Free and Accepted Masons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Junior

Order of United American Mechanics, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Guardians of Liberty, Sons and Daughters of Washington, Order of the Eastern Star, Daughters of America, Rebekkahs, Loyal Orange Institution, Knights of Luther, National Legion of Pathfinders, and Order De Molay. . . .

Information about the Great American Fraternity is reaching its stalwart eligibles "through certain channels" of the particular organization to which they belong. They are also receiving it in a more direct and official manner. Those who are anxious to take part in the great work without waiting for the regular operation of the machinery now in motion may address the Great American Fraternity, Georgia Savings Bank Building, Atlanta, Ga. . . . Americans, get to your lodges regularly now if you never did before, and keep in touch with what is going on! The crisis has arrived. We must win and save our land from the blight that threatens it. We will win!

Available statistics indicate that the organizations listed in the Great American Fraternity's schedule of eligibles for the bigotry merger comprise a total membership of at least two million in the United States. This does not include the Masons, whose responsible officers are out with a flat denunciation of the scheme, and who, if they exerted a tithe of the influence they possess, could do more to stop the Know-Nothing program than any other single force.

Already, and without the stimulating activity of the Great American Fraternity, Ku Klux hatred has forced its way to a greater or less degree into the politics of ten or more of the States. In Texas Robert L. Henry, twenty years a member of Congress, now a candidate for Culberson's seat in the Senate, was "accused" of being a Klansman. Unable, under the law of the Invisible Empire, to admit or deny the charge without a special dispensation "to uncover" from Atlanta, he held off until said dispensation was obtained, and promptly turned the accusation into an asset by loudly proclaiming himself a member of the Klan. He is now campaigning on that issue, and in a speech at Fort Worth declared: "The Klan will continue to grow, and these candidates of whom I speak [anti-Klan] and these great journals [anti-Klan] cannot destroy it." Speaking in a similar vein Sterling P. Strong, another of the five Senatorial candidates, opened his campaign in a speech beginning "I am proud to declare myself a member of the Ku Klux Klan."

It is not likely that the Great American Fraternity will actually enlist as paid members more than one-fifth or one-sixth of the membership of the Ku Klux and the other orders named in the schedule. But with such a nucleus it might well be expected to become a driving force in American politics, for behind it the promoters could reasonably expect to find the sympathy and support of the non-paying, but none the less ardent, haters throughout the land. Consequently, we may expect to read from now on of the increasing importance of religion in politics; of school teachers dismissed for their religious beliefs; of workers losing their jobs for the same reason; of boycotts of merchants for the same reason; and of repetitions North, East, and West of the crimes of ignorance and prejudice which for the past twenty years have been largely confined to the South.

### Contributors to This Issue

CHARLES P. SWEENEY has taken a leading part in the New York *World's* exposure of the Ku Klux Klan.

MCALISTER COLEMAN was formerly on the New York *Sun*. F. B. KAYE is assistant professor of English at Northwestern University.

GEORGE SOULE is with the Labor Bureau.

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