

The SMART SET

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More Katzenjammer

IN "Three Soldiers" John Dos Passos exhibited the disillusionment of the soldier in the field; in "The Last Mile" (*Doubleday*) Frank Macallister exposes the disillusionment of the soldier come home. The two form parts of a continuing narrative, the end of which is not yet. What we have, in brief, in America is a younger generation that has been taught to view democracy as the answer to all human riddles—and that gradually begins to realize that it is simply, at bottom, a degraded swindle. The victim in the present case is Lieut. Ralph Broadhurst. He goes to the war full of a fine resolve to sweat and suffer for human freedom; he swiftly discovers that the only actual beneficiaries will be a small class of rogues and usurers. Then he comes back determined to put down this infamy by political means, *i. e.*, to rouse the plain people, organize them into a *bloc* of virtue, and drive the money-changers out of the temple. A naïve and romantic fellow, he is carried by this high resolve into the orbit of the so-called Committee of 48, and becomes a delegate to the historic third-party convention at Chicago. There, of course, he quickly discovers that two-thirds of the heaven-kissing idealists in the new party are simply idiots and that most of the remainder are shysters. He comes back to New York almost completely purged of patriotic and moral passion. He has

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made the great discovery that the only way to purify democracy is with an axe.

The book is full of fine plausibility. It seems to me that the United States must be full today of just such fellows as Broadhurst. Mr. Macallister avoids the easy error of making him a superior and sniffish fellow. He is simply a young American of ordinary decency who, after having been bamboozled by Woodrow and company, desires to head off and prevent a similar bamboozling of the next generation. If he departs from the norm, it is only in the fact that he is intelligent enough to recognize the hopelessness of the enterprise—that is, by the traditional political means. The rest moan and struggle on. Beaten today, they hope for better luck tomorrow. When all other schemes fail they fall back upon the plan of “educating” the masses. But this plan, I am convinced, is the worst of them all. Our politics will never be raised to a civilized level by educating the masses; as well try to prevent dog-fights by training dogs in evangelical theology. The only feasible means of relief lies in developing devices for curbing and checkmating the masses—above all, for benevolently fooling them. We must invent a new demagoguery to counteract the old demagoguery. Is the scheme immoral and against God? Not so fast! Precisely the same scheme was put into effect by the early Christian Fathers.

