

THE LITERARY DIGEST

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A DEFENSE OF THE KU KLUX KLAN



WHEN KLANHOOD WAS IN FLOWER.

THE KU KLUX KLAN has been charged "with all sorts of crimes and misdemeanors, but so far not one charge has been proved," we read in the *Montgomery (Alabama) Journal*. In last week's issue of *THE DIGEST*, for instance, Louisiana members of the Klan were charged by Louisiana editors with the murder of two young men of Mer Rouge, named Daniel and Richards, and while there was denial on the part of Ku Klux officials that this horrible crime had been committed by members of the Klan, there was no specific defense of the murderers in particular or the Klan in general to be found in either Northern or Southern newspapers. We heard, on the other hand, that the Klan had usurped the Government of the State, but this is denied by the *Baton Rouge State Times*, published at the capital. "As a matter of fact, the Klan's political influence in Louisiana has been greatly exaggerated," says this paper.

Let us, then, in a spirit of fair play and for the information of both friends and foes, examine the claims of the Klan and its friends, just as we have presented the severest anti-Klan criticisms in previous articles. The Klan, briefly, is said to have fomented religious and civil strife; to have attempted to divide Americans into two classes—one to rule and one to obey; to be a purely commercial proposition. It is charged with having interfered with the United States mails; with being not merely a secret but a clandestine organization; with endeavoring to set up a "super-government"; with seeking to prohibit the free play of opinion; with being cowardly in its punishments and other acts, and with being a dangerous menace to established political parties. The Masonic Grand Lodge has announced itself as utterly opposed to the Ku Klux Klan; members of New York's State Legislature say they will support a bill calling for publication of the Klan's roster of names; one United States Senator has demanded of Attorney-General Daugherty that the Klan be disbanded by Presidential proclamation; Governor Olcott, of Oregon, is sure that if the Klan is not checked, open religious civil war throughout the country may be expected, and the State of Kansas is seeking an injunction to prevent the members of the hooded organization from continuing their activities in the State.

All this indicates to Mr. Bob Shuler, editor of *Shuler's Magazine*, that "a nation-wide crusade is being made by somebody against the Ku Klux Klan"; that "somebody is behind this attack," and that "when that somebody is located, a great light will shine." In an article reprinted in the *Eugene (Oregon) Register* as a Ku Klux Klan advertisement, Mr. Shuler comes to the defense of the K. K. K. and at the same time kicks another organization on the shins. As we are told in the Ku Klux ad:

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"This editor has repeatedly affirmed privately and publicly that he is not a member of the Ku Klux or any other secret organization. But when it comes to secret societies, he sees no difference absolutely between the Ku Klux and many others, the Knights of Columbus, for instance. The Knights of Columbus has an oath, just as binding, or more so, than the Ku Klux-oath. Moreover, the Knights of Columbus' oath is not one-half so American as is the Ku Klux. If you charge that the Ku Klux has put over mobs, I answer that the Knights of Columbus has put over two mobs to where any other secret organization on earth has ever put over one.

"This editor has been favored recently by being permitted to look over documentary evidence as to the tenets, principles and aims of the Ku Klux Klan. He finds that this organization stands with positive emphasis for Americanism as opposed to foreign idealism; for the principles of the Christian religion as opposed to Roman Catholicism and infidelity; for the American public schools and for the placing of the Holy Bible in the schoolrooms of this nation; for the enforcement of the laws upon the statute books and for a wholesome respect for the Constitution of the United States; for the maintenance of virtue among American women, sobriety and honor among American men, and for the eradication of all agencies and influences that would threaten the character of our children. So the principles of the Klan are not so damnable as pictured, it would seem.

"This organization is opposing the most cunning, deceitful and persistent enemy that Americanism and Protestant Christianity have ever had—the Jesuits. Speaking of 'invisible empires,' of forces that creep through the night and do their dirty work under cover, influences that are set going in the secret places of darkness, the Jesuits are the finished product. They have burned, killed, defamed, blackmailed, and ruined their enemies by the hundreds. History reeks with it. Tho I disagree with the logic of the Klan, the members of that organization declare that they can only fight such a foe by using his own fire.

"As to the charge that the Ku Klux Klan has functioned in mob violence in their efforts to correct conditions, I have this to say: I am convinced that most of the mobs reported have not been ordered and directed by the Klan as an organization. I am moreover convinced that many of them have been put over by forces opposed to the Klan and for the purpose of seeking to place the guilt for mob rule upon the Klan. The most of these mobs have been, according to investigation, not Ku Klux mobs at all, but gatherings of indignant citizens, bent on correcting conditions that the officers of the law refused to correct. The way to cause the Ku Klux to retire from the field is for the officers of the law to take that field and occupy it.

"The Ku Klux has the same right to exist so long as it obeys the law that any other organization has. We have not heard of any investigations of the Knights of Columbus, altho the un-American oaths are historic and their mob activities have been repeatedly published and heralded from platforms far and near."

"The Klan is as absolutely American as chewing-gum, crooked district attorneys, or chautauquas," observes H. L. Mencken, in the *Baltimore Evening Sun*. "If the American people knew the truth about the Ku Klux Klan, the opposition and apathy toward it would cease immediately," writes "931KNOIOK" in *Brann's Iconoclast*, formerly of Texas but now published in Chicago. Continues this writer:

"The Klan is neither partial nor antagonistic to any sect or creed as such. No, it is not because the Klan would deny them their religion and the inalienable right to worship as their own convictions or consciences dictate that aroused and engendered the hatred and opposition of the leaders in the Catholic Church. But it is due to the fact that the Klan is pledged to maintain inviolate and perpetuate forever the principle of complete separation of Church and State, and the Roman Catholics fight this, because no sincere and devout

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Roman Catholic does or is permitted to believe in the separation of Church and State. The Roman Catholic Church is first, last and forever opposed to the separation of Church and State and in favor of the absolute control and domination of the State by the Roman Catholic Church."

Still another authoritative defense comes from Fred L. Savage, Imperial Night Hawk, Chief of Staff to the Imperial Wizard, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, who writes in *The Country Editor*, of Rockville Center, New York:

"There is no organization in the United States that is more intensely American than is the Ku Klux Klan. It is composed solely of Americans; its history, its customs and its traditions are to be found in the annals of no country save America; its present purpose and its future mission are alike indissolubly

connected with American purposes and principles.

"The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan can be defined as an organization of native-born, white, Protestant Americans, banded together for the purpose of preserving, protecting and promulgating the principles of genuine Americanism.

"Bootleggers, marauders, traffickers in vice and other like gentry do not thrive where the Klan exists, not because, as its enemies assert, they are run out of town by a committee of robed and helmeted individuals, armed with tar-pots and bags of feathers, but rather because the American element of the community, organized and efficient, determines that law-breaking shall cease.

"The very thing that makes a man a Klansman—his oath—prevents him from remaining a Klansman if he violates the law or takes the law into his own hands."

From the Imperial Wizard, himself, comes still another authoritative declaration. Said he to the Washington correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*:

"The Knights of Columbus admit only good Roman Catholics to their ranks, and under the laws of the land they have a right to prescribe regulations under which their members are admitted. This right is not questioned by Klansmen.

"The B'nai Brith and Brith Israel admit only men of Jewish lineage. In this the Jewish people are sustained by legal rights not challenged by Klansmen.

"The African Blood Brotherhood restricts membership to men of the colored race only, and in this restriction they are not opposed by the Klan. The Klan does not take issue with them because they are also within their legal rights.

"By the same method of reasoning the Klan exacts from these people the right to organize and assemble into an organization only a particular class."

"It is usually the lawless element that is found working secretly against the Klan," writes Rev. B. A. Copass in *Colonel Muirfield's Weekly* (Houston, Texas). This writer, who says he is "not a member of the Ku Klux Klan, but merely a plain American citizen," tells us that "any one who is at all well informed knows that the Knights of Columbus are simply the Jesuits under another name." "Their cardinal doctrine is: 'The end justifies the means.' The end always is the advancement of Roman Catholicism. The Ku Klux Klan is American patriotism organized to educate against and to offset Roman Catholicism in American politics."