

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

The Last Decision.

Mann, Klaus

1942

Nutzungsbedingungen

Bei zahlreichen Dokumenten auf monacensia-digital.de sind die Urheberrechte bereits abgelaufen. Sie sind gemeinfrei und dürfen ohne weitere Rücksprache mit der Monacensia weiterverwendet werden.

Bei den Dokumenten, bei denen noch Urheberrechte bestehen, müssen für eine Weiterverwendung stets die Rechteinhaber*innen angefragt werden sowie eine Publikationsgenehmigung der Monacensia eingeholt werden. Das Zitatrecht bleibt hiervon unberührt.

Zur Erteilung einer Publikationserlaubnis wenden Sie sich bitte an:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus

Literaturarchiv

Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Terms of use

The copyrights for numerous documents on monacensia-digital.de have already expired. They are in the public domain and may be reused without further consultation with Monacensia. In the case of documents for which copyrights still exist, the copyright holders must always be contacted for further use and publication permission must be obtained from the Monacensia. The right to quote under copyright law remains unaffected by this. To obtain permission for publication, please contact:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus:

Literaturarchiv

Address: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Index 1942

The Last Decision.

Son of famous novelist commits suicide as magazine fails... This is not so very much of a sensation. Less startling, I suppose, than some story on Barbara Hutton's divorce.

Nobel Prize Winner's eldest son takes own life, disappointed with success of literary review... Not so hot. No news value.

I'll try to make it a little hotter.

I am going to tell you the inside story of this dreary case (.... "neurathenic scribbler can't face ~~that~~ flop of dull magazine..."). I'll ~~give~~ ^{you} the real dope. For now, at last, I am free. ~~Because~~ I am allowed to speak.

The son of the noted novelist - ~~who~~ ^{and}, incidentally, ~~was~~ a fairly gifted writer himself - wished and decided to die, not because the failure of his magazine. There was no failure, in the first place. There was what they call "a literary success", but there were no backers. This dreary fact - that there was no cash - would hardly have been sufficient to discourage me and to knock me out. It was quite a nuisance, indeed; but I have passed through even more trying things. What discouraged me and what did knock me out, was the way people behaved towards me in connection with this risky enterprise - a literary review in the year of 1941. For this is an evil year, and this is not such a good country.

It is a strong country, all right - a powerful colossus, heavy with wealth and charged with energies. It could be a good country, too. It is full, of course, of wonderful potentialities. If all generous impulses - the whole abundance of creative impetus inherent in its vast population, could ever be focussed on one great, ~~constructive~~ constructive idea - the result would be overwhelming - sweeping and elating enough to change and to save the world. But I don't see the great, unifying idea, or rather, the Americans fail to see it. The creative energies are

scattered and frustrated.

The America as Walt Whitman visualized and praised it - the "indissoluble continent", the "divine, magnetic lands," - has utterly failed to come into actual being. The one truly great poet this country has ever produced, Whitman, has remained without influence and response. What has become of his fervent Salut au Monde? The brutal complacency of some over-paid columnists.

I don't see any reason to hope that America will live up to her tremendous mission. What I see is smugness and ignorance, greed and vanity - in both camps, Isolationist and Interventionist.

Needless to say, the Isolationists are worse ~~and~~. The idea of ^{doing} ~~making~~ business with Hitler is too abject - the hope of establishing a nice little oasis in the midst of ~~a~~ general chaos is too preposterous, to discuss either of them. He who is still unable to grasp the intrinsic foulness of Hitler - who still belittles the universal calamity his victory would imply, must be stupid or mean beyond words. But the fact that the Nazis are so unspeakably rotten, does not indicate in itself that all anti-Nazis are inspired heroes. Many of them are ~~not~~, neither heroic nor do they have ~~any~~ much spirit.

Hitler will lose this war - of course, ~~he is doomed~~ he will, he is doomed. But the pivotal question is: who is going to win?

Are the people going to win this war? or the intellectuals? Is there any chance that those who have patience and strength enough to survive this horror, will live to witness or to create a universal Democracy?

I doubt it: that's why I don't want to live.

If I have to make up my mind between the lugubre prophecies of Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels and ~~the~~ Henry Luce's dashing vision of an "American Century", I prefer - suicide.

+++

What has all this to do with my magazine?

It's just that this little experience - the foundation^{ing} of that review, called Decision, and the desperate struggle for ~~its~~ ^{its} ~~existence~~ ^{its} life - has taught me some significant lessons. In fact, it was quite an opportunity to study and to watch ~~the~~ ^{the} "vanguard of liberalism." I have enjoyed personal contacts with most of them. I have seen their true face.

They are callous and snobbish and selfish; paralyzed by their vanity, haunted by their mania of making money. They have humiliated and cut and destroyed me, out of sheer inertia and smugness and that stunning lack of sympathy and imagination.

In the beginning, they sent me charming messages and allowed me to use their names for my Board of Editorial Advisors. But as soon as they had discovered that there was no fat, mighty backer, they withdrew - gradually and mercilessly. Dorothy Thompson, when a common friend said something to her concerning my ~~efforts~~ ^{attempts} magazine, murmured with that elegant casualness, ^{some} sometimes characteristic of dynamic speakers ^{when the performance is good:} "Yes, yes... I know, of course... A nice fellow, that Klaus Mann; a very nice fellow indeed... But I have no private life. No private life at all."

They promised me contributions - all of them: Pierre Van Paassen, Vincent Sheean, Robert Sherwood, et al. But copy never arrived. I couldn't afford the fees of the Saturday Evening Post.

One of the richest men in this country, Mr. Marshall Field, promised me - I swear that he promised me! - a considerable amount of money: "at least a part," as he said, of the \$ 20,000 I needed. Three weeks later, I received a note from that great Maecenas, beginning with the following paragraph: "I am afraid you will be very disappointed, but

after having consulted with some of my advisors on this subject, I have decided I should not, on account of other obligations, risk any money in Decision Magazine."

An Italian sociologist with a Mephistophelian mask in place of a human face and a wealthy wife in place of any talent, treated me as a contemptible beggar, because of my fatal mistake not to ^{have} married a lady with thirty millions. Illiterate businessmen from ~~Poland~~ Rumania or Poland boasted of their interest in culture, and refused a check. I went through an inferno of insults and disappointments - constantly vexed by phony pledges, evasive tricks, endless delays of overdue and insufficient contributions. I was very patient and more tenacious than I had ever thought I could be. I wanted to save the magazine. It meant so much to me - a token, a weapon, a promise. I wanted it to develop into a platform of international literature - organ and herald of a universal civilization to come.

There were encouragements, too. Letters came from anonymous readers - full of unassuming intelligence and understanding. I was ~~happy~~ grateful for any gesture - any sign of sympathy. Some of my friends made the most touching efforts to promote an enterprise which they considered worth while. The two who proved most zealous and most unflagging on behalf of Decision, were Maurice Samuel and my friend, Thomas Quinn Curtiss. The latter, now a soldier in the American army, is an unusually gifted young critic.

My father backed my foolhardy venture with the solid authority of his name. Men like Max Lerner, Upton Sinclair, Louis Fischer, told me and wrote me: You're doing a fine job! It's important. Don't drop it! My wonderful associate editor, the American poet Muriel Rukeyser, insisted: Don't get discouraged! Don't drop it!

But I had to drop it - because Mr. Field has other obligations and

the same

Miss Thompson no private life. I had to drop it because ~~creditors~~ who are ~~very patient~~ indulgent when hundreds-of-thousands Dollars are at stake, turn rude and relentless when it comes to obligations of less impressive dimensions. I had to drop it because the scarcity of money demoralized my own office: my ~~own~~ business manager who had started the magazine with me and whom I had unconditionally trusted, turned against me and malignantly ruined one of the last chances I had.

I had to drop the magazine, and I want to die, because I was - I am unable to face and to endure the exorbitant mass of mediocrity and malice, of ambitious ignorance and selfish laziness that rules the world and this country.

+++

Why do I write down these complaints? Why do I spoil my last evening with the formulation of my bitterness? Is there nothing else I have to say? Is this outburst of resentment and ~~the~~ frustration indeed my last word and will?

No - of course not. There are countless other things in my mind - some of them so sad that they might have killed me ~~y~~ many years before; others so sweet and beautiful and inspiring that they could almost prevent me from killing myself, even now. Yet, it is this petty affair of my ~~my~~ magazine, Decision, which I did not want to survive and to which I devote my final thoughts and words.

It's not that I overrate its importance. How could I? I am no fool.