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The Herald

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RICHARD B. SWENSON
Editor & Publisher

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Monmouth Meditations

The outstanding impression gleaned in a successful effort to shake hands with President and Mrs. Harding in Portland July Fourth was the elaborate precaution taken to see that no harm comes to him. No one gets near the president of the United States when he is on public exhibition who does not run the gauntlet of secret service men. These steely eyed gentlemen take their mission seriously and do not allow any mysterious bundles to get into the presence of the first gentleman of the land.

Of course where a few thousand of the sovereigns of America wish to personally greet their chief public servant, it is obvious that they can not all do it at once. They must do it in turn, and it is obvious that the fellow who happens to get in on the end of the line has to wait quite a while. We, (G. H. Partridge and ye editor) waited outside the Monmouth hotel something like three quarters of an hour. We started on the outside circle of the crowd, possibly forty feet from the east entrance to the hotel and gradually moved forward an inch or two at a time. When we got within four or five feet of the doorway there was a long pause. The crowd behind had steadily increased. Three policemen, like Horatius and his comrades, Herminius and Spurius Lartius, held the crowd at bay. Some of them didn't stand at bay worth a cent. Occasionally a callow youth with eyebrows and hair close together and a retreating chin would elbow up within sight of the promised land and then back out again. Occasionally a lady joined in the foot ball rush. One must have strained the elbow of a black waist, for she went at the mass sideways with her elbow like the point of a plow, but even she was powerless to penetrate that mass within five feet of the doorway.

In the meantime Horatius, the cop, and his dauntless side kicks held the gap. Occasionally they hurled jeers at the unfortunates before them. They may have been powerless to prevent bootlegging and burglary within their precincts but when it came to bullying a crowd they were right there with the goods. Again the bars were dropped. The crowd poured forward as the flood comes when the dam breaks. Again Horatius steps to stem the tide, and the jam in impotent effort surges and halts at the guarded doorway, but among those on the inside are Partridge and ye ed.

But there were other hurdles to make and we promptly set at it, joining a slowly moving tide up the stairway of the main lobby of the hotel to the mezzanine floor. Progress here was a little faster and we got to the top to hear the words: "Time's up; the reception is over." But it was only a false alarm. The president knew that distinguished citizens from Monmouth waited without and the jam went forward again.

We now noticed the blue coated policemen who tyrannized over the crowd below had given place to the Rosarians. The Rosarians are gentlemen who wear Palm Beach suits

ornamented with roses on the right sleeve of each coat. As befitted their nearer station to the throne, the Rosarians were not so crude in their methods as the blue coats below. "Take care, good people" one shouted. "Don't crush the furniture. Preserve this table. The president wants to eat upon it tonight." The table, by the way, was made out of planks and nothing short of dynamite could have dented it.

The table was placed across the floor serving to convert the crowd from mass formation to Indian file. The voice of the gentleman in the Palm beach suit constantly urged "Don't crowd. The president has extended the time. Don't injure this table"; and with a colored lady between us, Partridge and ye ed. passed into single file.

Any one who has ever watched a swarm of ants work can get an idea of that single file. The presidential party was nowhere in sight. Apparently it was miles away. The line turned into a doorway to the right, and who do you suppose was there seeing that everybody kept place and made a square turn? Why no one but Walter Toose, Jr. He was as busy as a boy killing snakes.

On we went down another corridor and in the course of half a mile more or less, the line made another turn and there the gentlemen in Palm beach suits became more numerous and more officious. Now instead of "Stand back" the tune was "Step up, step lively." Additional advice was volunteered. "Don't talk to the president". "Let the president do the talking". Step up, keep moving.

After another quarter of a mile or so the line took another turn and we entered a large room, the sanctum sanctorum. We were close to the goal. The Rosarians officiously swarmed on both sides of the line. Here the secret service men appeared. Inscrutable of countenance and with folded arms they looked us over as though we were so many suspicious characters. But no one minded them. Nothing could mar the serenity of that column bearing steadily forward.

Beaming like a benediction on the whole scene was Ralph Williams, known as the political marvel who has turned down a number of proffered political jobs.

"How do you do", said President Harding as he took each hand. "How do you do", said Mrs. Harding as she followed suit. That was all.

"Not much to get for so much exertion", says one. "Hero worship", says another. But it was the office, not the man, that the populace were interested in. The man, Warren G. Harding, would not of himself, have attracted such a demonstration; but the office of president of the United States is the largest executive job in the world. That makes the difference.

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