The Citizen has something to say - - -

'I Hear Whispers of A Country'

Continued from page one

Perhaps that is why the Irish have always admired courage, why they have dignified the "fighter" with a special place among them, why it could move one Irishman to observe: "Only a strong soul can look the Devil in the eye and make him turn away."

As had his ancestors, John Fitzgerald Kennedy learned to respect, to admire courage. In his study of the history of American politics, PROFILES IN COURAGE, a work which won for him one of the highest awards an author can wish, the Pulitzer Prize, he stated his belief that "to be courageous . . . requires no exceptional qualifications, no magic formula, no special combination of time, place and circumstance. It is an opportunity that sooner or later is presented to us all. Politics merely furnishes one arena which imposes special tests of courage. In whatever arena of life one may meet the challenge of courage, whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience—the loss of his friends, his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men—each man must decide the course he must follow. The stories of past courage can define that ingredient — they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this each man must look into his own soul."

It may not be far-fetched to say on this November day in 1963 that it is the man without a soul who is the man without a country. And it may not be more whim that makes us see that the "Rendevous with Destiny" that Roosevelt foresaw for all of us in 1933 has become the "Rendevous with America" for all of us in 1963.

For John F. Kennedy has now returned to the common dust from whence we all have sprung, to which we all return.

Yet, legends will be fashioned from his life and work, lies will be shaped and spoken of his person and his place in history.

But, like us, his ancestors

. . . heard whispers of a country
That lies far across the sea,
Where all men stand as equals
In the light of Liberty.

Unlike us, he rose to grandeur, maybe to greatness.

Though it may be true "that the irony of America today lies in the fact that your father must first make money before you can make history," it is not stretching the truth to reply that the promise of America still lies in the potential of each and every American.

And that potential is Irish and Italian, Polish and Ukrainian, German and Jewish, Finnish and French—a polyglot and mixed marriage of minds, faiths and tongues which seek now for expression, some way to speak the spirit of America before the world.

It may be a sad world, but there is still joy in it.

It may be a world where murder stalks the streets, but there is still love and tenderness to feed and fondle future generations.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy knew this. A man who knows that he can push a button and destroy half the world, can not escape a tragic view of life. Yet he fathered new life, sought to sow the seed of new ideas, new ways of solving what are ancient problems of mankind.

And he did it with a smile, with wit, with grace. Though he had a heart filled with grief, he knew the blessings of glee.

And it is time to smile again. It is time to take heart, to find courage. Despair whether it is private or public, is still the deadliest of the deadly sins.

For the whispers of our country still reach with the winds around the world. And though the soft, sad voice now speaks of tragedy, the sound of America will never be stilled.

Nor can the affirmation of triumph in the face of death be quieted; the premonition of a destined end be wiped away:

Something has spoken to me in the night,
Burning the tapers of the waning year;
Something has spoken in the night,
And told me I shall die, I know not where;
Saying:
"To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing;
To lose the life you have for greater life;
To leave the friends you loved, for greater loving;
To find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—
"Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded,
Toward which the conscience of the world is tending—
A wind is rising, and the rivers flow."

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On the Way!

by GEORGE W. SHROYER

INSTANT UNDERSTANDING

What more could words say? Since the first shocking report had shattered the orderliness of the day, the flow of talk had been incessant.

The laving of language washed the burning from the eyes, but there was in the endless flow of words no ablution to cleanse the heart of the knowledge of evil.

I turned off the television.

It was a much different day for my small sons. There were no cartoons to watch. Their delightful entertainment had been interrupted, they knew, because "a bad man had shot the president." The horror of the moment was in the wide-eyed statement of the three-year-old: ". . . and there was blood on his head!"

Now they spent their time in romping play. In their noisy and innocent response to the somberness of a tragedy that was beyond their understanding was protection against the assassin's bullet. The zest for living had not been destroyed in America.

An older sister collared them and persuaded them to sit on the sofa. With a welcome diversionary tactic, she led them in song. Flanking a white, inflated reindeer, with faces still flushed from running, they belted out their favorite number: "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

The depression of the day lifted. A cute picture for the family album, I thought; I immediately went for the Polaroid Color Pack Camera. The film was quickly loaded. The white, numbered tabs, however, did not position correctly; they could not be adjusted in room light. I went into my den, closed the door, turned out the light, and walked into a darkened closet. There the correction was quickly made.

I walked across the unlighted room into a camera-on collision with the unseen door. In the light, my fear was confirmed; the camera was badly damaged.

In an instant the magic of making a colored picture was lost. The marvelous camera was useless. In dismay I looked at the canted lens-board. This fine instrument that had given the family so much pleasure could not now serve us by capturing the instant and preserving its meaning for a lifetime.

The childish chorus had progressed through "Jingle Bells" to "Fishers of Men." This scene was lost but to memory.

The current selection of the Book Find Club arrived that afternoon. It was "Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr" by Jean-Paul Sartre, translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman. The jacket blurb invited reading: "At the very least, it seems safe to say that this extraordinary book is the most exhaustive evaluation — moral, social, religious, aesthetic — that a writer had ever received in his own lifetime. But in order to understand why a philosopher of Sartre's stature should have written over a quarter of a million words about a comparatively little-known man five years his junior, it is necessary to know something about the unique phenomenon of Jean Genet himself."

This is the promise of the book: to let us know something about a writer who "has no imitators. Though his novels and plays are being translated into a dozen languages, his reputation is still an underground one. Socially, morally, even legally, no other literary figure of the 20th century can be compared to him."

An incomparable man. An intriguing personality. But a quarter of a million words!

In the very beginning of this flow of words Sartre made an observation that seemed to fit the instant of a most momentous day. "To say 'instant' is to say *fatal instant*. The instant is the reciprocal and contradictory envelopment of the before by the after. One is still what one is going to cease to be and already what one is going to become. One lives one's death, and one dies one's life. One feels oneself to be one's own self and another; the eternal is present in an atom of duration. In the midst of the fullest life, one has a foreboding that one will merely survive, one is afraid of the future. It is the time of anguish and of heroism, of pleasure and destruction. An instant is sufficient to destroy, to enjoy, to kill, to be killed, to make one's fortune at the turn of a card."

An instant is sufficient to kill, to be killed. For John Fitzgerald Kennedy. For Lee Harvey Oswald.

An instant is sufficient to make a color picture of a momentary and momentous event — whether it be a time of anguish or of heroism, of pleasure or of destruction.

But is an instant sufficient to achieve an understanding of the significance in our lives of The Instant of this darkened day?

The camera is broken. But it is repairable, and so there is an end to my chagrin. If repair were impossible, the mass-produced camera could be replaced with another, identical in its mechanism, capable of taking and developing color pictures in an instant.

There is no identical replacement for the unique personality that was John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Others can match some of the achievements, others can strive to complete what he began, others can share his aspirations and accept his goals. None can take his place.

He was no camera.

We sometimes treated him as though he were a mechanical contrivance, ingeniously turned out to produce an instant picture of peace, prosperity, and well being for all of us. We expected of him a wide, wide view of a troublous world. In his keen intellect we hoped for the capacity to read the faintest of light in the

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On the Way!

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darkest of aspects and produce for us a clear vision. We demanded of him a quick focus on the problems that most concerned us. We wanted him to frame in his viewfinder the American scene as we saw it, and by some mystic process to arrange all the discordant elements into one harmonious composition. By some far-sighted magic we hoped he could bring democracy's distant promise into the foreground of our lives.

It was through the camera that we achieved such intimate knowledge of this man and his family. The instant of his enigmatic smile, of his hearty laughter, of his serious concern, of his aroused anger was known to us as well as the unguarded expression of one of the family. We knew more about him than we knew about the neighbor just around the corner.

Now the instant of his death has given poignancy and new meaning to the instant of his life as captured by the photographic art.

It was a rainy Saturday afternoon. Inescapable was the feeling that the heavens cry when great men die. Do they also show their grief when evil men perish?

In the gloomy evening I walked to the corner lunchroom and variety store. No wise men meet there — just men who wonder about the wisdom of men who are accepted as wise.

"There must be a lesson in this for the American people," an old friend opined. He was convinced that God willed the taking of this great leader from us so that we might be instructed in His ways.

In an instant who can divine God's will? In a lifetime who can know the wisdom of His ways?

From the magazine rack I picked up the current issue of Look. The cover picture was entitled: "The President and His Son: an exclusive picture story." A glowing and vigorous man exchanged a happy smile with his small son who stood on a bench, bracing himself against his father's shoulder. What would have been a heartwarming story of the relationship of a much too busy father with his companionate son was now a touchingly sad story.

Unwittingly the magazine's editor had projected that instant into the future: the magazine was datelined December 3, 1963 — 11 days after the death of the President.

"The instant is the reciprocal and contradictory envelopment of the before by the after," wrote Sartre.

In Texas the president was presented with a hat. Jocularly he promised to put it on the following Monday in Washington. But on Monday his dead hand clasped the ring given him by his wife.

Few now use the quaint phrase, "God willing", when speaking of their future commitments. But there is no future, no "will" in our language without the involvement of God.

Is this the lesson we need?

Before retiring, I picked up the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. It opened in my hands to Matthew 24. In modern tongue I read the first two verses:

"Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.'"

Are the scriptures to be used like the exposed entrails of an ominous creature, to be the basis for soothsaying? The instant has no answer.

The pundits of television, the soothsayers of the airwaves confidently predict what is on the political horizon. None of them foresaw the assassination of a vigorous, young president and the upheaval in political strategies his death would cause.

This incredible event did not fit into their orderly systems of political analysis.

The event cannot be denied. But the meaning can be manipulated by the survivors of the great man to fit an incomplete conception of the order of the universe.

Someone thought of searching through the catacombs beneath the capitol for the catafalque on which had rested Lincoln's bier.

Television's tireless commentators related the death of Abraham Lincoln and the death of John F. Kennedy in the same solemn tones. The word martyr became as quickly used for one as for the other. It was announced that burial would take place in Arlington Cemetery, at a site directly across the Potomac from the Lincoln Memorial.

The myth was in the making.

Locked in the twisted and now stilled mind of the murdered assassin was the motive for the killing of the first American president since Lincoln. In the spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and grief over the senseless assassination was lost the nice distinction of the true meaning of martyr. The mourners were oblivious to the fact that in the absence of reason for the killing was implicit denial of the fact of martyrdom.

But myths have served our people well. One could not deny the people as a new martyr the President whose words had so beautifully stated their deepest beliefs.

Words gave way to music, more eloquent and more emotive than anything the lugubrious commentators had said. In its beautiful memorial service of music related to the life and background of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the National Broadcasting Company fittingly let the listeners silently meditate on the meaning of a great man's life. As the television camera roamed over the country side and seaside he had known so well, the face of the man appeared in the face of the land.

A child can depict a human face. A few strokes, two dots, a blob, and a smear will be quickly recognized in any kindergarten as the face of man.

Man's face can be seen in the furrows of the land that he has ploughed, in the grain of the wood that he has used in his home, in the rough lineaments of rocks that lie in his garden, in the blossoms of flowers that adorn his bier. As the television camera searched the face of America, I could see the crude images of people. In the foliage of trees, in the etchings of the soil, in the craggy escarpments of natural wonders were fleeting faces of grief with dark, sunken eyes, and bowed brows.

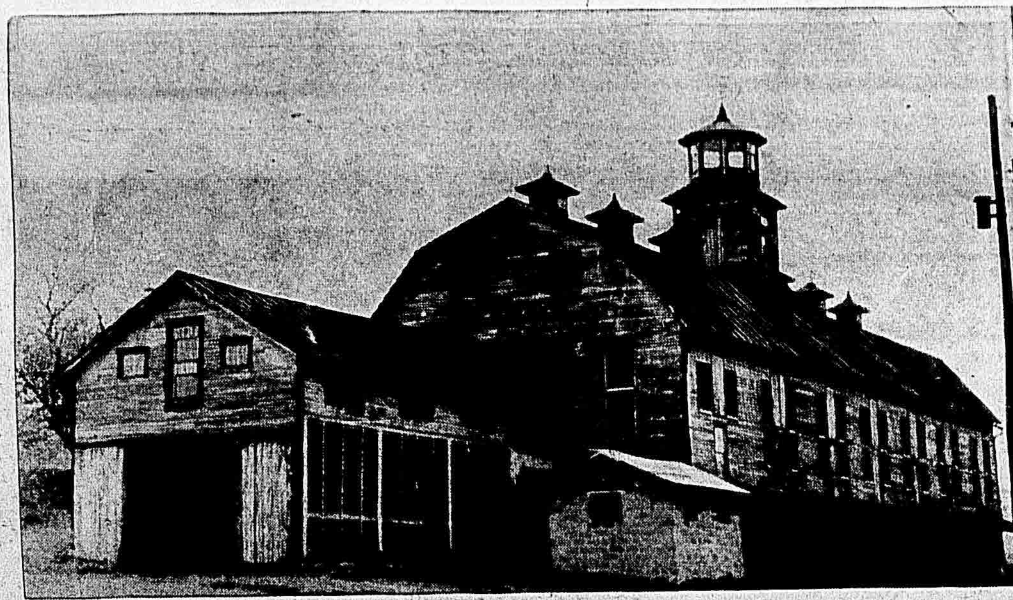
Myth it may be that John Fitzgerald Kennedy died the death of a martyr. But his deep commitment to the cause of freedom is a true and proper progression from the ideals of Abraham Lincoln. The need of the myth was felt. As the television camera softly ran its fingers of light over the noble visage of the Great Emancipator, my mind's eye saw in the wavy locks and the ruggedly sculpt cheekbones the courageous profile of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

"One feels one's self to be one's own self and another," wrote Sartre.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy's life will be written in the light of the instant that saw his death. "One lives one's death, and one dies one's life." Words that might have died his life now will live his death; they have been given new meaning and new vitality because of the heinous act of a man whose crime we cannot understand.

Of this insight into the meaning of an instant that expands into the past and into the future, no camera can make a visual record.

May the camera of our heart's understanding be ready to record that instant when we confront the meaning God intended this moment to have for all of us.



BARN OF SOBER FARM STILL STANDS IN IRISH VALLEY

Barn Still Stands On Site Once Famed for Chestnuts

by LOUIS POLINIAK

A cupola may not be the highest pinnacle from which to observe the world, except to a man who might stand in this dome, and look upon the world that only he knows.

Such a man once stood in his cupola, on top of a huge barn, and looked over his vast farm, where he had revolutionized the orchard business.

Now, the cupola is empty, the farm overgrown, but the wind that shuffles through the battered shutters tells a tale.

Coleman Kimber Sober was born in Irish Valley on November 24, 1842, spending his boyhood on his father's 700 acre tract which the elder Sober had purchased after the close of the Revolutionary War.

As a boy does, "Coley" observed every move that his father made, but was most intrigued when his father made grafts on the different trees in the orchards.

When a lad of twelve years of age, Coleman grafted his first Chestnut tree, much to the surprise of his father, who had treated the episode as a joke, never realizing, that this first graft would play a great role in the future life of his son.

LEAVES AREA

Coleman spent most of his summers on the farm. During the winters, he was in school, completing his education at the Danville Academy. When he was 18, he left the farm completely, and was engaged as a teacher for 18 years. During this time, he married Bernetta Anderson.

In 1880 he secured employment with a lumbering concern, and within a month, was able to purchase a third interest in the firm. A year later he acquired a half-interest in the company, which was then known as the Glen Union Lumber Company of Clinton County. Sober maintained his residence in Lewisburg, but in 1896, he returned to his beloved farm, 42 years after he had grafted that first chestnut tree.

The first thing that he did when he was back on the farm was to cut down the standing chestnut trees where he first had attempted chestnut culture. When new shoots appeared in the spring, they were grafted with scions which later were to produce the famous Sober Paragon chestnut. Coleman obtained the Paragon species from W. H. Engle, of Marietta, Pennsylvania. The tree was about five times as large as the American wild variety.

HUGE GROVE

The mountainside was cleared of pine and oak, in preparation for chestnut cultivation. On one side of the mountain, there was a grove that consisted of more than 300 acres, with rows a mile long. To the north of the farm, there was a 100 acre grove containing more than 300,000 Sober-Paragon registered seedlings, and grafted trees from one to three years of age. All trees were in-grafted with scions from the true Sober-Paragon trees, to produce hybrids.

To meet the rising popularity of the Chestnut as a food, Coleman opened a nursery branch in 1900, planting more than 200 bushels of chestnuts, and adding a quarter of a million seedlings.

During the early days of his return to the farm, the grafting was done by Coleman and his two assistants. As the work increased, 20 to 40 nursery men were employed, who grafted almost 500 trees per day.

Sober was shrewd in more ways than one. He conceived the idea of coloring grafting wax. Its use soon became apparent to his employees. Each nurseyman was issued grafting wax of a certain color. At the end of the day, Sober would personally count the number of trees which were grafted, making note of the quantity of different colored grafting waxes used. Using this method, he could determine if anyone was shirking on the job.

Coleman insisted that all scions were to be whipped or tongue-grafted, as he considered wedge grafting obsolete. He also developed a grafting wax that could withstand the heat of the summer sun. Prior to the use of bee's wax in grafting, mud and clay was primarily used.

The first orders for the Sober-Paragon trees were mainly from the New England states. As their fame spread, orders came from all parts of the country, Several carloads of bearing trees were sold every spring. The Chestnut Grove Stock Farm was fast getting an enviable reputation. Eight hundred acres were now in chestnut cultivation.

The Sober farm at its peak from about 1905 to 1913, suffered some loss in 1906 when the 17 year locust made its appearance, playing havoc with that year's crop.

While the chestnut was splendidly arrayed with creamy white flowers in the spring, or boldly tinged with autumnal shades of yellow in one part of the country, there was something strange happening not to far away.

A strange disease, or as an orchardist would phrase it, a blight, of unknown origin, appeared among chestnut trees growing in the famous Bronx Zoological Gardens. Interest soon became widespread, and attention was focused on Sober's chestnut farm. The national government, through the United States Department of Agriculture, and the state government, through the Department of Forestry and Chestnut Tree Blight Commission, had seen fit to investigate Coleman Sober's experiments.

THE BLIGHT

The top notch personnel of the commissions, a professor of Botany from the University of Pennsylvania, and a professor from the Department of Agriculture visited the farm and checked the trees on numerous occasions, as late as September 7, 1911.

Isolation lanes were cut across the mountains of Pennsylvania to halt the progress of the killing fungus disease, but to no avail. The blight made its debut in this region in 1914, and four years later, the chestnut tree, as other generations knew it, was gone from the mountainside.

The blight extended as far as Tennessee. The chestnut was its prey, and the whole Appalachian region, from Maine to Tennessee, its battleground. Where once the prickly burrs had shielded their treasures, only skeletons remained.

Nearly a half century has passed, and they have never recovered. A few specimens can still be found in denser forests, but just enough to remind one of the chestnut tree of yore.

Coleman Kimber Sober lost a fortune, the blight destroyed his plantation. A very disappointed and disillusioned man sold out to Dr. D. S. Hellenbach in 1920.

Coleman died a few years later, and is buried in Lewisburg, which had been his pivot between the lumber business and the orchard.