

[MacCurrie]

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WRITER Francis Donovan

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"Clockmakers"

Francis Donovan

Thomaston, Conn.

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A rain and wind-storm of near-gale velocity lashes the deserted streets outside the Fire House windows today, reminding Mr. Coburn of the recent hurricane, and he expresses the fervent hope that we are not to have another. The weather-vane atop the town hall,

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which made the Associated Press dispatches when it was discovered that for more than fifty years it had been pointed in the wrong direction, has become a plaything of the storm, and our attention being drawn to it, with resultant discussion of high places, the conversation centers on sky-scrappers. Inferentially, the conclusion is drawn that while sky scrapers are all very well in their places, the town hall building is by comparison a remarkably sound piece of work.

Mr. Coburn: "Sky scrapers sway in a windstorm like this. They move as much as fifteen feet. They got to build them that way, so they'll sway. If they were stationary, a wind like this would blow them over.²

Mr. MacCurrie: "It sure is blowin'."

Mr. Coburn: "I been in the Empire State, and I been in the Chrysler building. I went down with Morton when I was sellin' cars for him, and we went to the automobile show. He had his wife and daughter with him. We had to go to the Chrysler building for our passes. We got 'em from Mr. Walter P. Chrysler himself!"

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Mr. MacCurrie: "Is that a fact,"

Mr. Coburn: "Yessir. He talked with us just like he was a common ordinary sales manager, or something. You'd think a man like that would be kinda high hat. He asked us where we were from, and how business was. And I remember he asked us if there'd been any complaints from the customers about the price of the cars."

MR. MACCURRE: "I guess he kind of like to keep in touch."

MR. COBURN: "That's prob'ly why he's got all that dough. He still takes an interest in what's goin' on. He's interested in the problems of the business. They had a big exhibit of

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company products on the first floor of the building. There was a bunch of tools there, that Chrysler had made himself, when he was a young fella startin' out."

MR. MACCURRE: "He's a self-made mon, is Chrysler."

MR. COBURN: "I see his son, one time, too. I went up to a show in Boston, with Uppie, and a crowd of the other boys. Seven of us. We got to the show and went around a little, and then we stopped in front of this special job. Man, it was a sweetheart! The engine was chromium plated! You could'a used any part of it for a shavin' mirrow. We were standin' there admirin' it, and young Chrysler came along.

"He asked us how we liked it. Uppie said it was a sweet job. The lad said it ought to be, it cost the old man forty-five thousand dollars. He said he had it up to a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

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He started up the motor for us, and honest to God you could hardly hear it."

MR. MACCURRE: "Mon, lookit that rain."

MR. COBURN: "It's prob'ly a blizzard up in Winsted."

Mr. MACCURRE: "Goshen is the cold place. You never knew Jack Muller the painter, did you ? He was a comical kind of lad. He used to say he'd had his ears frozen once. If you asked him where, he'd say up in Goshen, pickin' strawberries in the summer time."

MR. COBURN: "Yeah, it must be cold up there. Well, I think I'll spend the afternoon at the movies. No use sittin' here lookin' at the rain all day." He leaves.

MR. MACCURRE: "Who's that, the Reeeverend Smith hikin' along in all the rain?" After closer inspection we conclude that it is indubitably the Reverend Smith.

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MR. MACCURRE: "How does he get along with the people, d'you ever hear? Some of them lads are always in dutch with the pareeshioner. Of coorse I don't know about him. I know the lad up on Park St. don't please all of them. But the good Lord himself couldn't please some of that bunch. They've had more meenisters than you got fingers and toes.

"They don't pay the poor deevils nothin' either. They had one durin' the depression had to go doon and get a basket from the town hall. I guess that's why none of them stay there. Soon's they get a better place, oot they go." Mr. Maccurrie brings out his snuffbox and his blue bandana handkerchief.

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"Raleegion," he continues, "means somethin' different to almost everybody. I never put much faith in it. Kind of turned me against it over in the old country, when I was a young lad. You couldn't do a goddom thing of a Sunday, no matter what you did it was a sin. I had to go to church whether I liked it or not. Of coorse there's two big creeds over there, the Presbyterians and the Free Church. Or there was, in those days. I suppose now there's all kinds and nobody pays any attention to any of them, just like the younger generation here in this country.

"The Salvation Army was about the only sect I had much respect for. They used to do a lot of good, and they got dom little thanks for it. That's why they wear those droopy hats, you know. When they first come around, the people would pelt 'em with rotten eggs and vegetables and dom near anything they could lay their hands on. Durin' the war, after they helped oot the soldiers the way they did, they built up a fine reputation."

The driving rain has slackened somewhat. Mr. MacCurrie wonders if it is going to let up sufficiently for him to take "a bit of a walk," but after close scrutiny of the leaden sky decides it is not.

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“Dom tiresome sittin' here in this chair all afternoon,” he complains. A glance at the clock shows that the paper is over-due, and his dissatisfaction deepens.

“Although there's not much in it but that dom trial, these days. You don't get a hell of a lot of foreign news. I read the weekly surveys in the Sunday paper, and that's where I get most of it.”

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I ask Mr. MacCurrie if he also reads the book reviews, and what he thinks of “Decline and Fall of the British Empire.” He snorts contemptuously.

“I've been hearin' that stuff ever since I was old enough to read. What makes them think it's crackin' up, How do they know what's the reason behind the British Foreign policy, Of coorse they backed water when Hitler got tough. What did France do? What did this country do? Don't this country take plenty of insults from Italy, and didn't they let Mexico grab the oil wells. What do you call that?”

Mr. MacCurrie's indignation reaches the place where it can be assauged only with another pinch of snuff. “Don't you believe everything you read, lad,” he says waving an admonitory finger. “Especially in newspapers. They've all got an axe to grind or a bone to pick. Look at that mon Hearst. I've not read a Hearst paper since Arthur Brisbane died. I used to get it just for his column.”²

Mr. Odenwald comes in, shaking water from a dripping umbrella.

“By God this is a dandy,” he says, “I wouldn'ta come down only they wanted something from the store, and the rest of them all said they'd rather go without supper than come out in this rain. But not me, I'd rather eat.”

MR. MACCURRE: “It's a nasty day, Henry. Did you see that dom paper oot there, Maybe it blow away. “He gets up to conduct a search for it.

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MR. ODENWALD: "I only stopped in for a minute." But he removes his coat and takes a chair. Mr. MacCurrie comes back in triumph with the newspaper. "They had it over on the other side," he says. "Here, Henry." He hands Mr. Odenwald Section Two. They settle back in their chairs with the paper.