

Carnival of Doom

The Days of Babylon Return

by THOMAS A. DAVIS

ST 1953



GALLOWAY

THE lights of Manila city danced and shimmered on the waters of the bay on the night of January 1, 1942, and across the waves drifted the sound of music, loud voices, and laughter. In the hotels and clubs revelry ruled with a wanton hand. Bacchus, the god of wine, roamed through the ballrooms and cocktail lounges, and the gala celebrants drank freely to his health.

But in each corner and behind every shadow lurked the dark phantom, fear, for every reckless merrymaker knew that the occupation of the city was only hours away. But banish the thought! Drink yet more deeply, laugh still more loudly, for tomorrow—who knows? And with the dawn the Japanese came.

Another night long before, the circumstances were much the same. The red wine splashed freely into gold and silver cups held by unsteady hands. Laughter rang out and echoed back mockingly from the vaulted halls of old Babylon. Suddenly grim fear silenced the licentious king and his revelers, and Belshazzar watched, pale-lipped and trembling, as a ghostly hand etched his doom and the doom of his kingdom upon the palace wall. Through the unguarded river gates poured the soldiers of Darius the Median, and "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain," and his kingdom faded into history.

Roll back the years still more. Once again the sound of drunken revelry was

heard. In the cities of the plain there was dancing in the streets. Utter abandonment flaunted itself before the face of God. A night of careless pleasure was whirling a vice-drunk crowd toward a morning of flaming death.

"They did eat, they drank; . . . but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:28-30.

Today, as in the days of Lot, multitudes the world over live only for diversions that help them forget the cold reality of living. The pyramiding billions spent yearly in these pursuits witness to the increasing frenzy of the senseless, perdition-bound quest.

JUST TRY IT

by INEZ CLARK THORSON

Forget the faults of others
And think about your own,
Forget the things that rankle,
Remember kindness shown.

Results are quite surprising,
Just try it once and see
How quickly clouds will scatter,
How bright the day will be!

Millions of Americans are seeking to drown their present fears in rivers of alcohol and to hide the black picture of the future behind clouds of tobacco smoke, while they hurry from one mind- and soul-crippling amusement to another. In 1951 \$9,150,000,000 was expended by them on alcoholic beverages. They lighted 421,000,000,000 cigarettes and 5,800,000,000 cigars in the same year.

Referring to America's mania for entertainment, a recent writer penned these serious and thought-provoking words:

"On television and radio, in the movies and newspapers, we see people knocking themselves out trying to entertain us. They seem to feel that, if America would only collapse in a paroxysm of mirth, all our problems would be solved. Frankly, I don't feel like laughing. I can see ideals and standards and heritages dying—dying before our eyes. . . .

"America finds sin hilariously funny. We are not the first nation that has done so. Babylon saw it that way, and the handwriting came on the wall. Rome saw it that way, and faded from power. France followed suit, and moral decay became a cancer. Now America laughs at sin. Laughs hilariously. . . .

"What is so funny? Are atomic bombs and broken bodies and full sanitariums funny? Are drinking leaders and shady business deals and open gambling a cause of mirth? Are . . . filthy jokes and immorality causes of hilarity? Why

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laugh when the moral fiber of a great nation is being wrenched apart by godlessness?"—*Canadian Reader's Digest*, April, 1953.

The Carnival of Doom goes on. Men are swept closer and closer to the swirling vortex, and time runs out.

England, war weary and economically anemic, has been called "the largest and most efficient gambling den in all the long history of man's pursuit of Something for Nothing." Some ten million gamblers empty their pockets of £60,000,000, or about \$1,680,000,000, each year in a feverish attempt to get and forget. In addition, Britishers spent the equivalent of \$506,800,000 on moving pictures and other entertainments in 1951. They consumed more millions in tobacco and alcoholic beverages.

Turning to Canada, we view an equally dark picture. It has been estimated that an amount "equal to more than one half of all the money in circulation in Canada, is rung up each year on the cash registers of Canada's various liquor-selling establishments."

In other fields of entertainment and dissipation similar evidence is seen of that nation's mounting desire for pleasure; the crowded movie houses, the well-patronized commercial sports, gambling, the letting down of the barriers of morality, obvious evidence of the words of Scripture, "The whole world lieth in wickedness."

Halfway around the world, in Australia, we see a similar situation. A recent newspaper article quotes the chairman of a subcommittee on gambling as saying, "Gambling is a disease far more serious than any epidemic." The report went on to say that Austral-

ians spend something like £200,000,000 a year on gambling. Another report claims that more than 80 per cent of the population bet, and adds that New Zealand has a similar situation.

In a recent year Western Australia expended half as much for liquor and tobacco as for groceries. Australians are consuming two and one half times the amount of wine they drank before World War II.

These scenes multiply themselves around the world. Europe, South Africa, the Far East, South America—all have their tales to tell of man's efforts to crowd the present with pleasures and to blot out the unreassuring omens of the future. We are reminded of those solemn words of warning to be found in *The Desire of Ages*, written more than fifty years ago:

"The crisis is stealing gradually upon us. The sun shines in the heavens, passing over its usual round, and the heavens still declare the glory of God. . . . Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling hells. The highest excitement prevails, yet probation's hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the day of probation shall be ended, and the door of mercy be forever shut.

"Solemnly there come to us down through the centuries the warning words of our Lord from the Mount of Olives: 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.'"