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IRVIN COBB

HIS BOOK



BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON

IRVIN COBB

HIS BOOK

FRIENDLY TRIBUTES UPON THE
OCCASION OF A DINNER TENDERED TO
IRVIN SHREWSBURY COBB AT THE
WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL, NEW YORK
APRIL TWENTY-FIFTH, MCMXV



Old Irvin Cobb's back home!

J.M.F.

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

IRVIN COBB—THE MAN WHO STAYED
DISCOVERED: Being Some Extracts from an
Appreciation by Robert H. Davis in the *New York
Sun*, October 19, 1912.

It is not for me to indicate when the big events in his life will occur or to lay the milestones of the route along which he will travel. I know only that they are in the future, and that, regardless of any of his achievements in the past, Irvin Cobb has not yet come into his own.

* * * *

I know of no single instance where one man has shown such fecundity and quality as Irvin Cobb has so far evinced, and it is my opinion that at fifty his complete works will contain more good humor, more good short stories, and at least one bigger novel than the works of any other single contemporaneous writer.

* * * *

One is impressed not only with the beauty and simplicity of his prose, but with the tremendous power of his tragic conceptions and his art in dealing with terror. There appears to be no phase of human emotion beyond his pen. Without an effort he rises from the level of actualities to the high peaks of boundless imagination, invoking laughter or tears at will.

* * * *

He writes in octaves, striking instinctively all the chords of humor, tragedy, pathos, and romance with either hand. Observe this man, in his thirty-seventh year, possessing gifts the limitations of which even he himself has not yet recognized.

* * * *

There seem to be no pinnacles along the horizon of the literary future that are beyond him. If he uses his pen for an Alpine stock, the Matterhorn is his.

Some critics and reviewers do not entirely agree with me concerning Cobb; *but they will.*



BY ORSON LOWELL

C — O — B — B

By Sinclair Lewis

A man has to be not only famous but well-beloved before the little facts of his biography become known to any one but his mother and his aunts. Voltaire and Rousseau are useful persons to whom to refer when you are dragged to a talk-party, but you feel no burning curiosity as to where they were born or what editorial page saw their first effusions. It is Robert Louis Stevenson whose home in Samoa you photograph; whose refuge in Monterey you visit. And so it is with Irvin S. Cobb, who is three things: a big reporter, a big writer, and a big man.

If there is a newspaperman in New York who says that he doesn't know that Cobb was born in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1876; that his first newspaper work was on the *Paducah Daily News*, that he did the Goebel murder trial, moved to Louisville, came to New York and stole a job on the *Evening Sun*, then that newspaperman is one of the I-knew-him-when club, whose family name is Legion and whose middle name is occasionally Liar. To be a New York newspaperman it is necessary to know Doc Perry's and the fact that Cobb was born in Paducah.

There's a reason for it other than the fact that Cobb is a big writer and a well-beloved man. That is: Cobb has made Paducah, and all the other Paducahs—in Kentucky, and Minnesota, and California, and Vermont—from which the rest of us came, live for us, in fiction which gets us as no foreign tale ever can. He makes one smell the soil—a thing that has been said of him so often that it is a platitude.

Covering the Portsmouth Peace Conference for the *Sun*, writing humorous stuff for the *Evening World*, making a national reputation for straight reporting with his account of the Thaw trial, Irvin Cobb had developed into a good, dependable star reporter when suddenly he broke away and in a story in the

Saturday Evening Post, a story called "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," he made himself known as a probable genius. No one could tell, yet, but in that story, the dramatic structure of it, the words like sparks from a third-rail in a snow-storm, the intensity with which the author saw himself as the chief character of the tale, there was evidenced a new American genius. Lord knows we needed him. We had—we still have—been letting England and France and Kulturland beat us ten to one in fiction. We had—we still have—a number of expert penmen who could do well with a wealthy young Yale grad. in a motor car; others, largely feminine, who could cheer our hearts with sweet stories about the Little Woman Who Always Smiled. But where were the writers who could go out on the street, really see the folks going by, and present them truthfully and interestingly in fiction? With one lone short story, Cobb had elected himself as one member of that missing and much need class of geniuses.

Stories of the South followed; other stories, too, of New York. The mere list of them, as they appear in the two books called "Back Home" and "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" is enough to bring thrills to every reader of fiction: The Belled Buzzard, An Occurrence up a Side Street, Another of Those Cub Reporter Stories, Smoke of Battle, The Exit of Anse Dugmore, Fishhead; Words and Music, Five Hundred Dollars Reward, Up Clay Street, The Mob from Massac, Black and White, and the rest "Words and Music," the first story in "Back Home" might be used as a test for the Americanism of anybody. It's a seditious, Confederate, Southern story, but anybody, Yank or Southerner, who doesn't thrill to it, doesn't feel all the old traditions of the real country when he reads it, is a fake-American, a person of hyphenation.

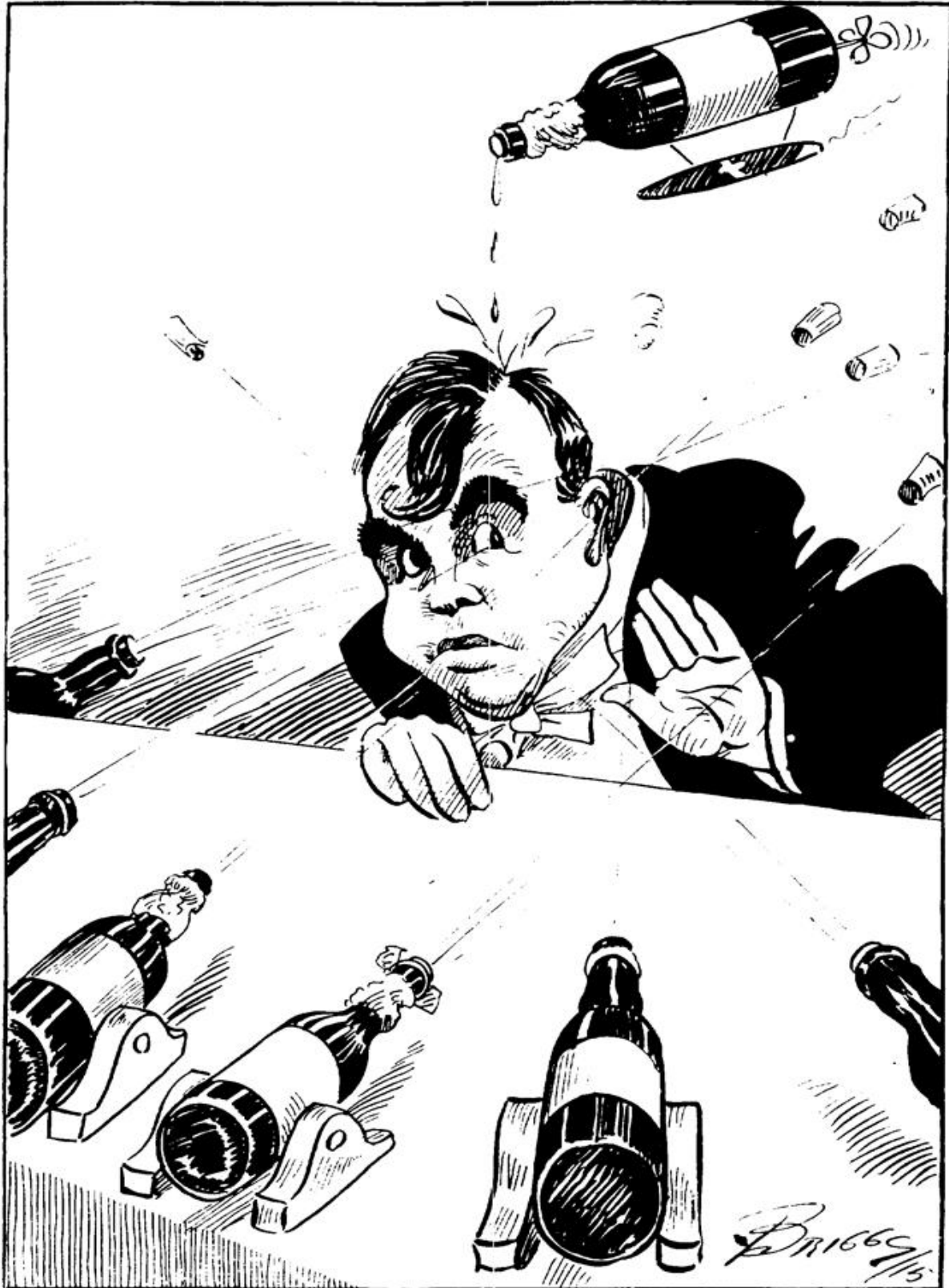
Meanwhile, writing these slices of authentic genius, Cobb was not forgetting his humor, and he decorated the *Saturday Evening Post* with improper references to stomachs and dentists and vittles and art, published in book form as "Cobb's Anatomy,"

and "Cobb's Bill-of-Fare," then with irreverent things about the tourists and real-estate artists from the Grand Canyon to San Francisco, published as "Roughing It De Luxe," and still more irreverent things about the grand old game of doing the American tourist, published in "Europe Revised."

And then the Great War, and Cobb's account of it in "Paths of Glory."

I have listed his books at such length—because they are at such length. Here is Cobb, aged only thirty-nine, a mere child in the game. A few years ago everybody was surprisedly saying that he was a good fellow, fished discriminatingly, told edifying tales, was a friend of Bob Davis and George Horace Lorimer and Sam Blythe, was not very handsome, but was one of the few big newspapermen in whose records there wasn't one single black spot, one single case of meanness or pettiness or failure in sympathy. The diagnosis was usually wound up, "He will be a big writer." That is, to-day, no proper ending for this scholarly biography of Cobb, for he *is* a big writer, and his permanent place depends upon his written word.





WHEN A FELLER NEEDS A FRIEND

BY BRIGGS

KUDOS

"Not to exceed one hundred words."—*The Editors*

I

A hundred words to eulogize
And crown with figurative flowers
Our honoured one?—
And chant his praises to the skies
During these merry midnight hours?
It can't be done!

II

Search dictionaries for his fête!
Rummage Thesaurus through and through
And also rob
Encyclopedias to date!
Their million words are all too few
To honour Cobb.

III

No! All the languages of Earth
Set to the music of the spheres
Can't do the job!
Not words but hearts enshrine your worth,
Master of laughter and of tears,
Old Irvin Cobb!

—*Robert W. Chambers*

* * * *

You may praise, you may flatter I. Cobb if you will,
But the band of his derby will fit round him still.

—*Julian Street*



BY HARRISON FISHER

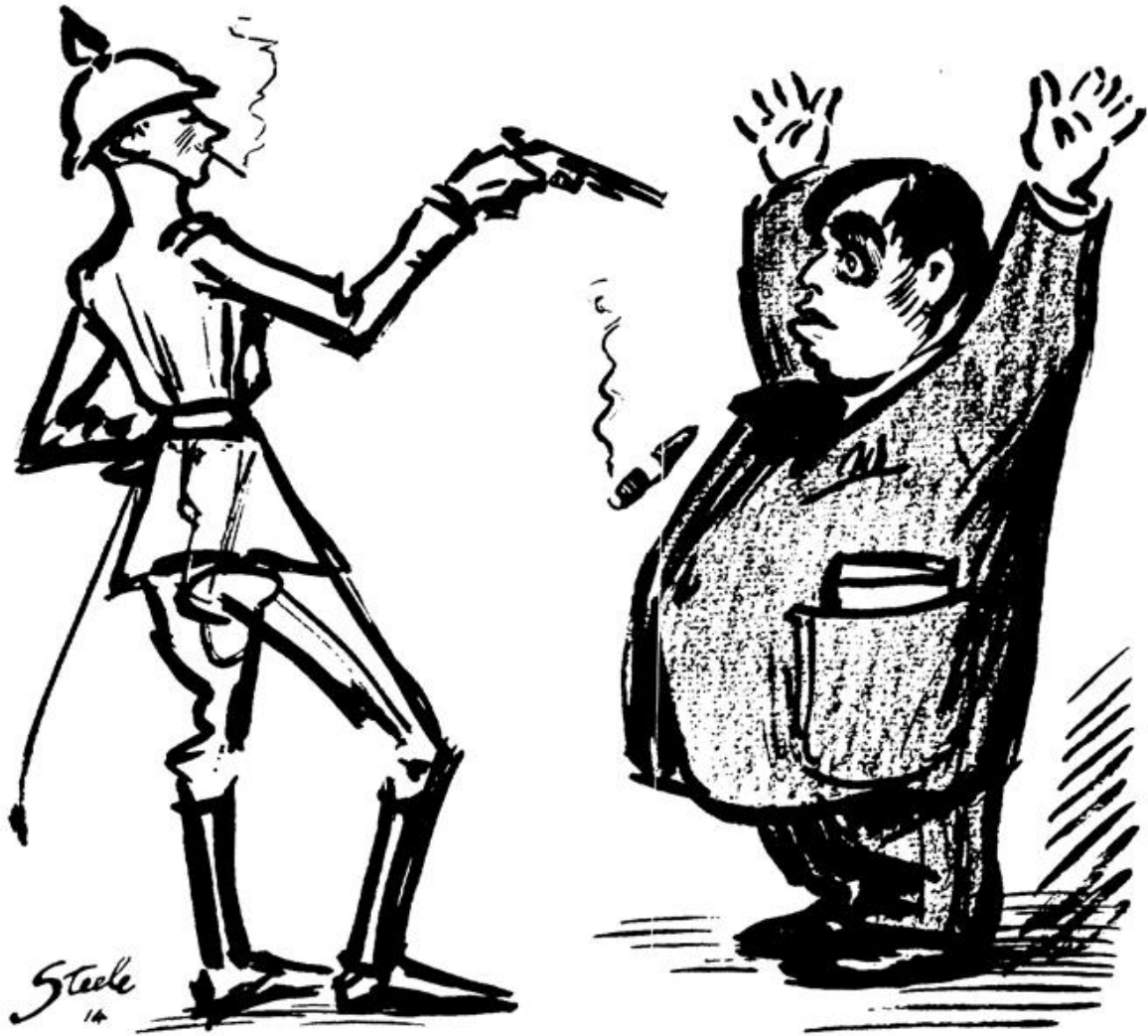
There is nothing in the world pleasanter than meeting nice people, and by nice people I mean in the case of men, good-tempered and entertaining people. Women, to be really nice, must also be good looking. An author—it is to this tribe that Mr. Cobb belongs—gives us the pleasure of meeting him twice; meeting him twice, that is to say, for the first time. I met Mr. Cobb in a train between Chicago and Memphis, a vile train which went through maybe a dull country. Mr. Cobb was the one redeeming feature of the journey. I had him in my bag and I fought for the possession of him with my wife. He was nicely bound and there were more than 200 pages of him. The next occasion on which I met Mr. Cobb for the first time was at an afternoon party. It was quite as dull as the railway journey until—a foolish person insisted on my making a speech and then on another man making a speech. That shows how dull the party was. Then the same person, turned suddenly wise, said that Mr. Cobb was to tell stories, and he did. The party was not dull any more. That was the second of my two first meetings with Mr. Cobb. I met the author and I met the man. There was no disappointment about either meeting.

—*George A. Birmingham*

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If Irvin Cobb had ever been a ball player he would have been more of an all-around player than Tyrus R. Cobb by about twenty-two inches.

—*Grantland Rice*



"I CAN'T THINK OF ANY REASON
WHY I SHOULDN'T SAY I LIKE
THE GERMANS, BECAUSE I DO
LIKE THEM, VERY MUCH!"

I have been asked to write "an appreciation" of Irvin S. Cobb. I appreciate Cobb, but if I appreciate him too much he will raise his prices, and if I appreciate him too little he will seek an editor who understands the artistic temperament, so I appreciate him just enough. I appreciate him because he makes laughter; because he makes tears; and because he makes circulation. But most of all I appreciate him because he is the only man writing for the magazines who was not discovered by Robert Harding Davis. As Editor of the *Paducah Bugle*, Cobb was the first man to discover and appreciate Irvin S. Cobb. Tonight he sits among us a monumental example of apt appreciation's artless aid.

—*George Horace Lorimer*

* * * *

I can imagine nothing more superfluous than giving a dinner to Irvin Cobb, regarded from the viewpoints of nourishment, nutrition and waist measurement. If, however, there is some idea in the proceeding of giving the lie to the ancient calumny that no one loves a fat man, then the occasion may serve a useful purpose. If it goes still further and seeks to establish affirmatively that every one loves one particular fat man, I heartily endorse the undertaking. If this is the theory, a number of dinners should be given to Irvin Cobb, and I should be glad to attend every one of them.

—*James S. Metcalfe*



ME UND COBB

BY CESARE

I. S. C.

I hate like the devil to drop into verse
Because hardly a chap can do it much worse:
Still prose sounds so dull when your mind lights on Cobb
And the writer of verse has some chance with the job;
For if ever a chap breathed forth sunlight and wit
And could write and then talk as if they were nit
And wooed you, and held you and made you first gulp
And tighten the throat and made you like pulp
Just to turn you to laughter until your sides ache,—
It's Cobb: bless his heart and his wit: and I ask him to take
This rotten attempt to bid him God-speed
In taking the world and his wife in those paths
Where laughter and smiles still hang on the trees
And fun goes with sunshine, like the heart of a child!

Who wrote this? Oh, Lord: here's the key to the lock,
Just read Cobb's name backward, and you can't miss the dock.*

* Edward Bok

* * * *

Cobb's ability as a football player should entitle him to speak at every Gridiron dinner. Cobb may require a sofa to sit down on, but, as an all-around star he stands alone.

—Walter Trumbull



BY JOHN T. McCUTCHEON

To-night, as I look at Mr. Cobb, aglow with all that tailor, laundry, barber and friendship can do for man, I find it hard to realize that this is the same Mr. Cobb I saw one day last August in Belgium.

Time had not dealt gently with him that day. The sun of his smile had set early in the forenoon. His beard was several days gone. His raiment was an affront to at least three of the five senses and all that was left of his spirit was the droop.

He had eaten nothing for a long time, his feet were sore, and he was so chafed that he emanated sparks at every step.

Even in a land as rich in ruins as Belgium, he stood out a conspicuous masterpiece of wreckage.

The homeless Belgians pitied him!

Late in the evening, after several hours of brooding silence, he gave utterance to the following statement:

“I wish I was back in New York, just sitting down to a good square meal with some friends.”

And so to-night it is pleasant to realize that virtue is at least triumphant and that his wish has come true.

—*John T. McCutcheon*

* * * *

My admiration for him and what he has done is really beyond words.

—*J. A. Mitchell*

IRVIN COBB

HIS BOOK



IRVIN KULTUR COBB
PADUCAH KY. U.S.A.
AS "GERMANY"
IN
"EUROPE REVISED"

BY WILLIAM H. WALKER

(BY CABLE)

Monumental on a boot cleaning stand, he is equally interested in cigars and in assassinations, and he likes to wear his thinnest clothes in winter. His stories are always reliable, even when they deal with the British War Office. After annexing Broadway he took Belgium and his book thereon is history. He sees straight and writes straight, and I am his friend and his fan.

—*Arnold Bennett*

* * * *

Cobb's "Paths of Glory" is acclaimed throughout Britain to be the most vivid, most moving, most convincing of all books on the Great War; which means the British public recognizes in the printed page the compelling personality of its author. I am proud to be his publisher.

—*J. E. Hodder Williams*



To Irvin Cobb
with keener admiration
Howard Chandler Christy, 1915.

BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

Irvin Cobb leads his league in everything but base running. He went to the Belgian battle-fields equipped as a war correspondent with a facile pen, a sense of humor, and a wonderful repertoire of darkey stories. He came back with a neutral dialect, a reputation enhanced by the depth and sincerity of his writing, and the mantles of Archibald Forbes and Bennett Burleigh combining to cover—at least—portions of him.

—*Walter Hale*

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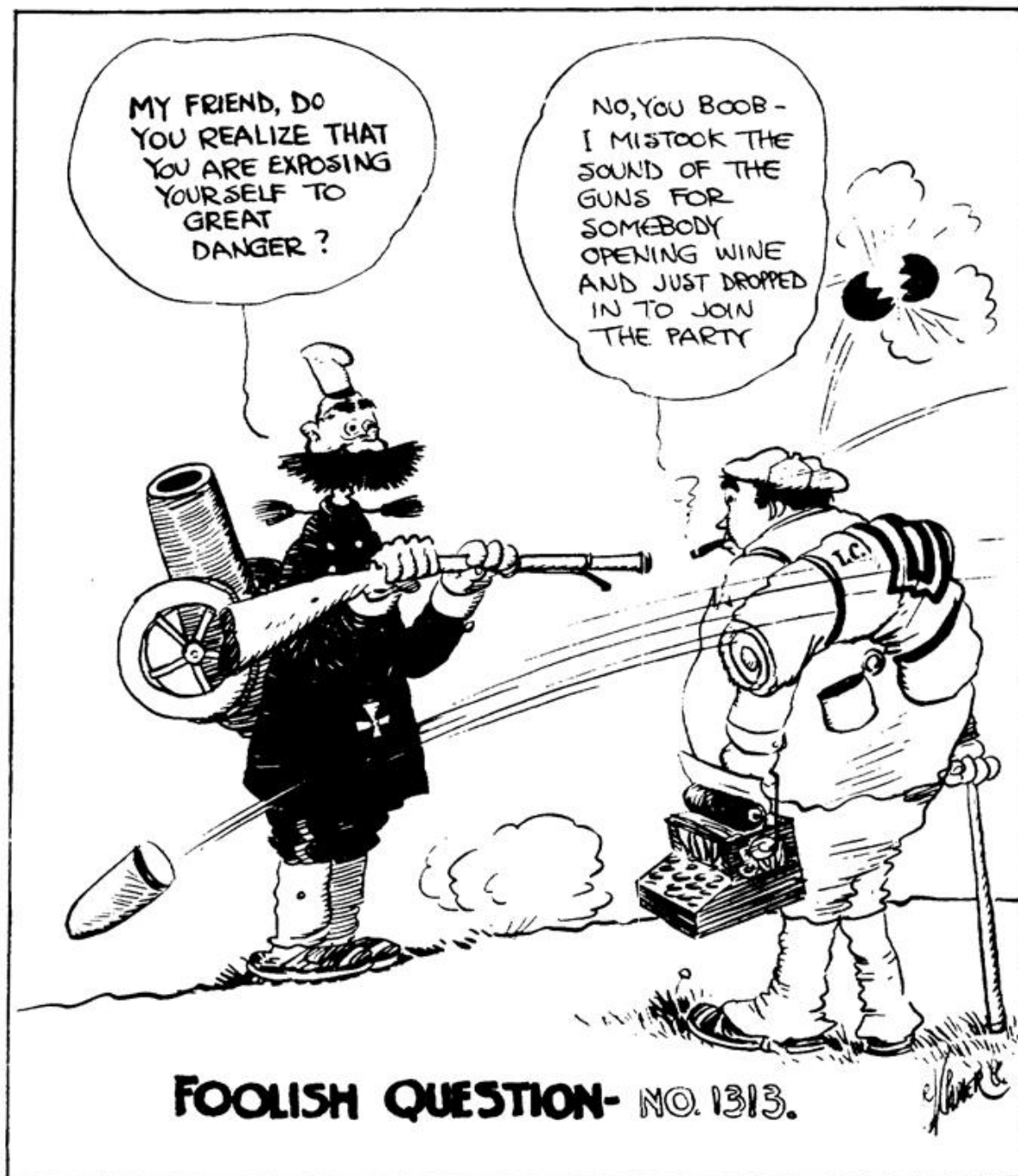
We have long appreciated the corn of the South whose bright kernels, properly distilled, make brighter Colonels still. Yet when before have we worshipped the Cobb of the South? Here, surely, is all the brightness and all the stimulation—and all the nourishment which a fat land can give to a lean and hungry world. More joy comes from one Cobb than from 1,000,000,000 bushels of corn—and although he is rare, in one sense, in another he may be ranked as the South's largest output.

—*Wallace Irwin*

* * * *

I see no reason why I should not say that I like Irvin Cobb—because I do, very much. He does not irritate the throat; and, if you are a magazine editor, his is the stuff you will eventually buy.

—*F. P. A.*



The surest and simplest way to appreciate Irvin Cobb is to start in to read him when you are too busy or too tired to read anything at all.

—*George Barr McCutcheon*

* * * *

Irvin Cobb! Gentle, keen, loyal and truth-telling—the best ever.

—*Wm. Travers Jerome*

* * * *

Certainly I appreciate Cobb! I appreciated him long before the mob got on to him. But the thing that galls me is—why the wrist watch? He came among us out west here, wearing a 27-jewelled, steam-heated, forty-dollar wrist watch and I assure you it is not being done here at all—at least not in our set. Shall we blame the Germans for this, or is Old Irv slipping? From my heart, I ask you to reason with him.

—*C. E. Van Loan*

* * * *

This is the first time in five years I've regretted not being in New York.

—*Harry Leon Wilson*

Monterey, California,
April First, Nineteen-fifteen.



ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN -
FROM DESCRIPTIONS

BY ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

Irvin is a true humorist in that he knows when not to be funny. In addition to numberless works of irresistible joviality, he has contributed to American literature some of its most serious notes, including stories of pathos and also of gruesome power, almost unrivalled. He has written important essays on food, too, one on Southern cooking, in particular, that is as savory as Charles Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig." We are safe in hailing Cobb as already a classic.

Everybody reads and rejoices in Cobb's printed self. Those who know the man love him and rejoice in his society. "Cobb's Anatomy" is for the general public. His heart is the biggest part of him, and if that were not true, this unusual dinner would not be given. It takes more than a great writer to earn great affection.

—Rupert Hughes

* * * *

A big brain needs a big belly to balance it.

Irvin Cobb has a well-balanced brain.

He's never top-heavy and never will be.

In all the years he wrote for the *Sunday World* he never was late turning in his copy, reaching the pay-window, going to luncheon, buying a drink, laughing at his own jokes or demanding a raise in salary.

In his New York career he has made only three mistakes in judgment: his house in Park Hill, the play he wrote, and leaving the *World*. The first he *may* sell, the second he can live down, but the third is irreparable,—if not to him, assuredly to us.

—William Johnston



BY ALFRED FRUEH

UNSOLICITED—EVEN UNCALLED FOR—
TESTIMONIALS

Damn the speeches, go ahead and eat.

—*Admiral Farragut*

* * * *

From somewhere in England,
April something,
19-5.

In my opinion Irvin Cobb is one of the _____
that ever lived!

—*K. of K.*

* * * *

“Cobb’s Anatomy” to me is bigger, is funnier, than “John
Brown’s Body.”

—*An Admirer*

* * * *

DEAR COBB:

Always leave the table a little bit sober.

Yours,

—*Ralph W. Emerson*

* * * *

IRVIN S. COBB:

Appetite and capacity, now and forever, one and inseparable.

—*D. Webster*

