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# On The Sooner Scene

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CHRISTMAS traditionally marks a moment of peace. Oh, sure, there are the frantic shopping jaunts through great crowds of other shoppers, the sudden panic of addressing Christmas cards and attempting to get them into the mails in time, the parties, the excited, shrill whoops of kids opening their presents.

But there are moments, too, during the week of Christmas when one pauses and thinks thoughts which do not come at any other time in the year, thoughts which seem so beautiful that they almost burst the breast. Thoughts of hope, faith, appreciation. Well, after all, one tells oneself, it really is a swell life after all, when something like Christmas can happen every year.

The entire season—beginning at Thanksgiving and lasting through New Year's Day—has a magic quality about it. And the fact that this season closes out the year is one of its most obviously saving graces. Moving into the yuletide days is, for many of us, about like having crossed the swift river of the rest of the year, then reaching a firm and safe bank; we rest there for a time and then, with renewed strength, plunge back into the river and lengthily, perhaps painfully, cross it again.

So Christmas is—or should be—a time of peace. But think back: how long has it been since Americans, as a whole, have really been able to feel at ease at year's end? It's been a stormy century. The Depression led right into the most frightful war history has known. Then came a cold war, then Korea, then more cold war, and today—

Today, Christmas 1957, Americans find themselves nervously observing a sudden period of transition for the world. Ameri-

cans, too, have been thrown into a shadow of self-doubt; no longer is the United States ahead of all other powers in scientific development, no longer are our educational methods working out just fine, no longer can we settle back into a comfortable well-being that is strikingly American and feel that we will nestle there for more than the briefest interim.

The minds of men do not mercifully go blank during the yuletide, so at this time there can be no real settling back in the easy chair next the Christmas tree and relaxing in contemplation of the joys, the good things in life.

In *Sooner Magazine* this month are two articles concerning unnerving subjects. One, Dean Glenn C. Couch's "Where Education Has Failed," seeks to explain just why it is that this country has suddenly come up short on scientists. Couch does not stop there; he offers some strong advice for correction of our educational policies and methods. You may heartily punctuate his statements, or you may heartily disagree. But at a time when education has found itself in a huge maze, men like Couch, who have had long experience with the system and its products, need to step up and offer ideas. Only through gathering ideas, then separating the grain from the chaff, and then taking definite corrective action will education survive the test it now finds itself faced with.

The other article, Howard Upton's "The Old Rat Race," is an angry one, too. But Upton—an Oklahoma alumnus like Couch—turns his sights on the American attitude toward big business, and squeezes the trigger several times. Upton is for clear thinking and facing reality. He's sick to his stomach of the whining so many of us emit concerning the confinement of our jobs and the seemingly deranged ambition of our co-workers. He's sick of people who keep telling him that they'll go nuts if they don't run off soon to the South Seas and paint canvases or write novels, then turn right around and admit that they like the comforts of our way of living and working without realizing what they've said.

In effect, both these men are shouting Wake Up at their fellows, and they're both slashing at immaturity, trying to nourish a clear-headedness. They obviously remember the ending of *Candide*, the story written by one of history's wisest men, Voltaire; without good hard work, said the Frenchman, and without direction, there can be no purpose in life, no progress, no happiness.

James Thurber, celebrated humorist, once wrote this: "The world is so full of a

number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings—and you know how happy kings are."

This Christmas the world is frighteningly full of a great many more things than we've been used to for some time. The hydrogen bomb is in evidence. Guided missiles have recently taken on new dimensions in our fears: both Russia and the United States can launch them from just about any place now, even from a sub-

merged submarine several hundred miles from its target, and they're pretty sure to hit those targets.

Then there is Sputnik.

So no thinking American will really rest this Christmas. Peace is not on earth. Americans will be the smarter for getting in touch with God this year, and asking Him to strengthen their faith and help them to help themselves in this time when crisis looks so dangerously near.

