

"The prickly pear,"

The man found no hope of an otherness in Existentialism with its only value as life itself.

"Here we go 'round the prickly pear,"

The man searched, intuitively hoping to find a religion which transcended man. He looked at Faith, the absolute as a God, a divine otherness. But the idea of a divine otherness does not transcend man, for man can only understand a divine otherness in terms of psychoanalytic ego-involvement. In faith the man could not find a philosophy transcending relative and devaluated man.

"At five o'clock in the morning."

The man, dizzied by his futile searching, finally thought that no reality as an absolute existed beyond man. He faced for a second the complete insignificance of man.

"This is the way the world ends,
This is the way the world ends,"

His intuitive hope had shrivelled into an overwhelming sense of futility. The man saw nothing beyond himself except the nihilistic abyss.

"This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang but a whimper."

The Day Civilization Died

Russell L. Durbin

"THE ONLY thing we have to fear is fear itself."—F. D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933.

Fear was a tangible thing, oozing from the pores of thousands of surging, wild-eyed people. Like a giant boa constrictor, it writhed through the city streets, holding the people in its deathly grip. It was a whip that lashed people into a screaming, howling mob.

They ran. They ran in every direction, not really knowing where they were going—somewhere—anywhere away from what had once been the heart of a thriving mid-west metropolis. It was a veritable stampede, a great tidal wave of humanity sweeping through the streets, smashing everything in its path. A searing holocaust behind them drove them on with unseeing eyes, minds frozen with the horror they had just witnessed.

A mother stumbled and fell, and no one paused to help her get up. The human tide covered her and swept on. Her children, caught in the flow of the crowd, had to fight for themselves—a los-

ing battle for crying ten- and twelve-year olds. Ribs were crushed, toes smashed, people suffocated in the crush of the crowd. Cars roared through the streets only to smash into other cars, and no one stopped to see if anyone was hurt. A person fought to maintain balance, raking faces with fingernails, kicking, shoving and pushing.

The mouths of the people were open, but there were no distinguishing cries. One tumultuous sound pounded against the eardrums, pulsating with the combined voices of men, women and children screaming agonizingly with fear. It was a wild thing that rose and fell like a mighty siren, seeking to warn a nation.

A fat, overdressed, bejeweled woman with fear showing through her mask of make-up burst from a store and threw herself into the streaming mob, using her heavily loaded purse as a lethal weapon, smashing and battering her way through the crowd. A burly man in his shirt sleeves was literally climbing over the still-living bodies of people in his unseeing haste to escape. They were like a mass of ants, fanning out from their destroyed anthill, looking for shelter and seeking to escape. But unlike ants they were unorganized. There was no rule but mob rule. The glossy pelt of sophistication had been stripped away, leaving the raw animal instincts exposed.

Less than an hour ago, they were normal Americans, going about their everyday business and activities, buying and selling, giving and taking, loving and hating. But the attack had changed all that. It changed the situation so rapidly that they were unable to comprehend what they saw. One moment their city was bustling through the noon hour in orderly confusion, and the next moment, the center of the city disappeared and in its place—a mushrooming cloud and roaring flames hundreds of feet high.

They were not prepared for such a devastating attack. They had known Civil Defense as words, nothing more. There was no discipline; there was no shelter. There was no one to tell them what to do.

Two Army officers and a small band of soldiers armed with machine guns attempted to establish martial law. They set up a barricade and warned the people to halt. But the warning went unheeded, probably unheard, as the mob surged against the barrier and swarmed over the soldiers, massacring them. The frenzied horde poured out of the city and into the country. They ravaged the countryside like locusts, destroying everything in their path. They burned, looted, smashed, trampled and killed. They kept going with nothing but time able to stem the tide.

Now they were gone. An old farmhouse stood dark and silent, a grim specter surveying the destruction. Nothing moved, save for a fluttering candy wrapper skipping across the barnyard in the face of a lonely breeze. No sound was heard except the forlorn flapping of a pair of levis dangling from a clothesline. Darkness enveloped the ravaged land and the day ended—the day that civilization died. History had a new chapter.