

CRUSADER

Ernest Trueblood must have been a blood relative of Carrie Nation. Almost from birth, it was obvious that he would be a reformer. The first reform he ever put through took place even before birth when he was still in the womb. The Truebloods had been in the habit of going to movies at least twice a week, but as Mrs. Trueblood's lying-in period approached, this sinful habit of going to movies was disrupted. The future Ernest Trueblood's fetal soul must have rejoiced greatly, assuming that his fetal conscience allowed him such an obvious pleasure as rejoicing.

His next major reform started as soon as he got home from the maternity hospital with his mother. Trueblood Senior was in the habit of lolling in bed until exactly eleven minutes of eight at which time he jumped out of bed, tore through his morning toilet, ate breakfast, and sped down to the corner to catch the 8:05 bus à la Dagwood. This sensuous pleasure of his father must have irked the infantile but none-the-less puritanical soul of Ernest, for the very first morning he was home, he raised such a howling and mewling that Trueblood Senior could not continue his sleep, but had to wake up at the ungodly hour of 4:00 a.m. and prepare Ernest's bottle.

Omniscient ^{though} ~~as~~ we are, it is difficult to determine the cause of the zealous reform that burned in Ernest's heart thereafter. The success of his first two reforms is hardly an explanation as many babies before and since have accomplished the same reforms and still have developed into

quite amiable persons. It has been suggested, however, that he developed a dour disposition because of two pleasant, well-meaning but sour-breathed, homely, old-maid aunts who used to gush over him and fondle him until his stomach turned at their very approach. This nauseating experience conditioned him to react violently to people who approached him smilingly. Such people like that immediately gave him the revolting vision of his two old-maid aunts. As a partial consequence, he developed a strange admiration for a sour, miserly old uncle, who, in turn, became fond of Ernest for his never-smiling countenance. From the time Ernest was able to say, "daddy," or what Trueblood Senior claimed to be "daddy," this avaricious relative, ^{a disciple of Poor Richard apparently,} used to set Ernest on his lap and feed him such platitudes as "Hard work never killed anybody" or "Be ambitious, young fellow."

This had a profound influence on Ernest's plastic young mind. However, the plasticity of Ernest's young mind was so worked over by the truisms of his uncle that it was no time at all before his ideas began to be as set as those of his uncle. Thus armed, his first venture into the outer world, id est, grammar school, found him appalled at all the evils of indolence and gaiety, and he determined that he would devote his life to the straightening out of other people's misspent lives.

In grammar school he frowned upon such frivolities as tag and drop the handkerchief. The teacher, a young lady just out of some teacher's college tried to use the plain

psychological approach to get him into the games with the other children. "Be ambitious, young fellow," Ernest snapped at her. His whole grammar school career was marked by such episodes. So zealous was he in his reforms that even the teachers came to dislike him. When he was graduated from grammar school they had a "most unpopular pupil contest" instead of a "popularity poll" and Ernest won without a dissenting vote. He merely regarded it as further proof that he was right and everybody else wrong.

His career in junior high school was much the same. But here he got to the point where he told the teachers how to dress, female teachers in long black dresses and male teachers in black suits and black ties. He would not enter into any of the sporting games with the rest of the children, but stood aloof sneeringly. Such things as games he thought to be the work of the devil, and he was loud in his proclamations to that effect.

By the time he got to high school, far from being discouraged at the unfavorable reception his ideas were getting, he was more determined than ever to do all he could to reform the evils of the world that the people regarded so complacently. He felt that he was divinely appointed by God to rectify these ills and sought to give expression to his noble ideas by getting on the school paper. So unpopular was he that he couldn't get on the staff of the paper, however. But did that discourage young Trueblood? Certainly not. He purchased a mimeograph machine and started to publish pamphlets.