JOHN HOWARD LAWSON'S SECOND
DRAFT OF PROCESSIONAL, 1921

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The purpose of this article is to provide historians of American drama the first detailed description of the second draft of John Howard Lawson's Processional. This draft, of Acts I and II only, was written in France and is dated January 15, 1921, when Lawson was a little over twenty-six years old.

Processional, "A Jazz Symphony of American Life," was presented by the Theatre Guild "frankly as an experiment" for 96 performances beginning January 12, 1925, at the Garrick Theatre, New York, and at the Comedy Theatre, the 49th Street Theatre, and again at the Garrick.

To put it bluntly, the Theatre Guild, outwardly the "Patron of Ceaseless Experiment," was afraid to produce Processional, originally scheduled as the Guild's first production in its new Theatre Guild Theatre but moved to the Garrick instead as a protective move.

Theresa Helburn, then executive director of the Guild, has reported that even before the controversial production at the Garrick, "people were bombarding her with the incessant comment that Processional wouldn't go." But Processional not only went, it raised a rousing controversy — "the town has

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1) This description is based upon a manuscript made available to me on microfilm by the Curator of the Lawson Papers, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

2) Also written in France, the first draft of Processional, of Act I only (different from Act I in the second draft), is dated August 30, 1920, when Lawson was not quite twenty-six years old. A description of this draft will be presented in "John Howard Lawson's First Draft of Processional, 1920" in a forthcoming issue of Keiei to keizai.


been torn asunder and homes otherwise peaceful have been threatened by
disruption” said Louis Bromfield in The Bookman—and Lawson got the appella-
tion “bad boy of the American theatre.”6

(Historians of American drama will quickly see that the Processional
produced in 1925 was not as “bad” as its second draft in 1921, which was
considerably changed in direct relation to commercial realities of the time,
e. g., the conservative theatrical and political expectations of the Guild’s
middle-class subscription audience.)

In his preface to the published version of Processional (1925) John How-
ard Lawson emphasized method. He had “endeavored to create a method
which shall express the American scene in native idiom.” The “new tech-
nique” is “essentially vaudvillesque...a development...of the rich vitality
of the two-a-day and the musical extravaganza.” For “it is only in the
fields of vaudeville and revue that a native craftsman ship exists. Here...a
shining if somewhat distorted mirror is being held up to our American
nature. Here the national unconsciousness...finds a partial reflection of
itself...Here the concern is with direct contact, an immediate emotional
response...” The world Lawson saw around him in the early 1920s was
lively and “grotesque” — “Rabelasian in intensity.” He heard the “colorful
exaggeration of the American language.” He said the “reality of America
spiritually and materially is a movement, a rhythm of which the inner
meaning has not been found.”

Over forty years later Lawson said in his unfinished and as yet un-
published autobiography — “In trying to achieve an American style, I relied
too much on superficial dramatic Values. It is not true that the real man-
ners and modes of theatre are preserved in burlesque, musical comedy and
vaudeville. There are vestigial remnants of imaginative projection in these
forms, but the imitation of the forms of popular theatre is as far from art
as the throwing of a cream pie in someone's face is far from the art of
Chaplin. Processional is too naive, too eager for shortcuts in the means it
employs. The cartoon, the comic strip, the stereotype, are used for them-
selves, rather than as the starting point of a deeper exploration. The lead-
ing characters break through the stereotypes in moments of emotion. But
these people, driven by violence and a tragic sense of life, are not fully
realized as persons. They are larger than life as symbols, but their conduct
is explosive, and disconnected, or, to use the modern term, existentialist.”

6) Bushell Dimond, “A Glimpse of the New Plays,” Broadway, March 6, 1925,
p. 2.
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(By existensialist Lawson means the tendency of characters in many contemporary plays to accept the absurdity and cruelty of existence and absolve themselves of guilt by denying moral responsibility. See his Introduction (xi) to Theory and Technique of Playwriting 1960.)

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The action of Act I of the second draft of *Processional* begins in a suburban town on the Fourth of July.

The main street is represented by a drop curtain exactly like those used in suburban vaudeville theatres — signs, painted opera house, hotel, etc. — the only difference being that it is more startlingly crude, vigorous in color contrast, more blaringly American. Boob Elkins, a thin pimply-faced boy of sixteen, dressed in stiff holiday clothes, waves a small American flag. Boob imitates the flag waving (and the bent body) of Old Pop Pratt, a typical Civil War veteran, wizened, undelievably old, in a tattered blue uniform, bent almost double on his wooden leg, his old face sharp and red under stringy white hair.

A long bugle call is heard, then the noise of people shouting, then martial music. Pop Pratt, hard of hearing, waves the flag for the states. There are forty-six, but Pop quit countin' states in 1893, the year his granddaughter died. Yeller curls, she was a devil, that Amanda. Pop pounds his cane.

Boob tries to tease the old man: "Ever seen a girl's leg above the knee?" Pop cocks a hand over his ear: "Eh? What battle was that?" Boob's question repeated louder, Pop gives a mad chuckle: "Did I!" Then he menacingly calls Boob a young ape, the son of a monkey. Boob adroitly moves away — leaving behind Pop a lighted fire cracker. It explodes with a big bang and big puff of smoke. Boob laughs, almost doubling up, as Pop jumps high in the air and lands unsteadily, waving his cane and arms wildly.

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7) The subtitle "A Jazz Symphony of American Life" is absent.
8) In *In Praise of Learning* (1951) Angus MacHeath, a college gardener, also has a wooden leg; so does writer Jed Merton in *Parlor Magic* (1963).
9) Lawson's only daughter was born in 1929. Her name is Susan Amanda Lawson.
10) In the first draft of *Processional* there is a scene in which Boob kisses the knee of teenager Sadie Regelstein.
A few balancing antics, then Pop chases Boob but bumps into MacCarthy, a grizzled muscular young man with dirty red hair, who thinks: “There weren’t no war except our’n — the late European war.” Behind Mac enter Slop, a thin bent man in a uniform with sergeant’s stripes, and Smith, a small spidery man with a drum.

Boob says he was there on Washington Street when these guys marched away to war. Smith recalls the women was crying. MacCarthy shouts loudly in Pop’s ear: “...the Argonne, Chateau Terry — there was a stinkin’ lot o’ blood in the woods.” Remembering, Slop coughs up.

Mac wants to show Old Pop the bayonet wound in his tail and starts to take down his trousers — he wouldn’t care if he did that in the Library of Congress: That’s the sort of guy he is. Old Pop shakes his head sadly: “Poisonous gas, you say?” Smith raises Mac’s pants slightly at the rear so Boob and Pop can bend down and see the wound. Pop says Mac must’ve been approaching the enemy backwards. Mac says he was shot lying down shooting: He Shot 51 Huns, ‘cause his mother was 51, an’ he figgers that’s luck. Smith says: “A guy’s mother is luck.”

Slop says: “Can’t you forget — that stuff is old.” Mac answers: “Ain’t we marchin’ today to remember? Marchin’ in full uniform on the Glorious Fourth with the bands playin’ an’ them flags streamin’ out.” Slop says Mac is going to be like Old Pop. Slop adds: “To Hell with History!” Smith likes to remember: He saw so many bodies without heads. Funny. Slop reproachfully says he’s going to be sick at his belly and leaves.

Old Pop Pratt waves his cane:

“That weren’t no war. You didn’t even fight on American soil. Let American blood water the American earth! (He taps his wooden leg) That’s what my flesh done. Fertilizer for American earth. My leg went to make the flowers grow on Gettysburg. (The others laugh) We fought our brothers...”

Smith says next time American blood. Smith shakes Pop for not understanding. Pop waves his little American flag high: “But I hold my head high without understanding! I wish the young had half the pride.”

Josias Tannenbaum, a rich man, enters with Phillpotts, his private secretary. As he passes Old Pop, Tannenbaum raises his hat formally.

11) Lawson’s mother died when he was seven years old.
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Nervous when Smith beats a rumbling noise on his drum and sings at the top of his voice: "America, I love you, an' there's a hundred million others like me," Tannenbaum rubs his hands with pleasure: "A great patriotic picnic." He'd like to serve sandwiches and ginger ale to everybody to make himself popular. When he was a boy, a poor boy, he used to call the people the gang. Touching this is. Patriotism.

Phillpotts says people will celebrate anything. They'll celebrate Tannenbaum's funeral (not soon, he hopes) with flags and bugles and big noise. Tannenbaum hmns: "No doubt." They exit.

Mac Carthy and Smith discuss Tannenbaum, who owns the town — and them.

Smith says: "His flesh, we are." Mac Carthy says: "His brothers." Smith says: "His slaves." He sings "America, I love you." Old Pop asks what about a girl? Bring on the naked women! He's old, he chuckles, but he's ambitious. Mac Carthy complains there's no more hot women. But Boob pops up he knows a hot one. Mac says Boob's nose is in everything.

Boob dodges a fist and exits whistling, followed by Mac and Smith, Tannenbaum and Phillpotts re-enter, followed by James Flimmins.

Flimmins is a young, very tall, thin, bitter man. Rough-hewn face. Muscles as hard as granite. His cap is pulled down over his eyes. His long grey ragged coat, fastened tight at the collar, clings about him rather like a winding sheet.

Tannenbaum says: "What heart doesn't beat at a time like this? The one universal emotion is patriotism' deep-rooted in the human heart." Patriotism unites all men in one brotherhood.

Phillpotts asks if brotherhood includes Jim Flimmins. This Possibility interests Tannenbaum: "I'm a student of human nature." Phillpotts wants to inform the newspapers about that. But Tannenbaum is not talking for the newspapers. He's talking as a citizen, as a bit of a socialist. (Phillpotts laughs.) Tannenbaum doesn't often get a chance to see the genuine people, acting natural, free. Phillpotts asks: "Don't you see them in your factories with their muscles straining?" Mere machines, says Tannenbaum, who knows the voltage of that man Flimmins, who stands as if fixed. Phillpotts wonders if Tannenbaum can understand the electricity in that "dead figure." Tannenbaum is interested not in muscles but in hearts beating red. Phillpotts
cautions: "Not red!" Tannenbaum enjoys this bit of humor.

At times like this, Tannenbaum feels the people — the gang, he used to say as a boy. Glorious Fourth! What a great patriotic festival. Phillpotts refers to festivals of blood, festivals of the heart, barricades. "Nothing in it," says Tannenbaum, who walks over to introduce himself to Jim, who nods at the outstretched hand, sullenly spits, but shakes: "I'm Jim Flimmins, come from prison." Tannenbaum, nervous, gives Jim a ten-dollar bill, which Jim stares at with a dull fixed look, then tears in pieces which he drops.

Phillpotts explains: Jim went to jail six months before for Bolshevik agitation: "Something about a flag. It was in the strike. He was more or less of a half-wit. That's not the agitator type. That's the dumb American." Tannenbaum wonders what goes on in the people's houses, and Phillpotts says the people's houses are brewing like cauldrons through the night.

But what, Tannenbaum asks, of that sacred institution, American Home Life? He says no, no, as Phillpotts, shrewdly cocking a tinger, says: "Faked."

Grocery boy Boob enters whistling. Tannenbaum and Phillpotts ask him personal questions. Boob doesn't know his father. Some says his mother went to Hell with a moving picture actor. Some says his mother took poison.

To Tannenbaum's question, Boob responds the people in the houses are rejoicing and waving the flag with 49 happy stars, proud of their sons. (Boob learned this in school, he admits.) Boob then points at Tannenbaum: "What's in your house behind them velvet curtains?...naked women marchin' in rows...White naked women with their legs powdered..."

The two men are taken aback, then laugh and leave.

Enter Regelsteln and his daughter Sadie.

12) One of the main themes satirized in Loud Speaker (1927) is that of the faked American Home Life of a pork barrel politician.
13) The theme of suicide appears in Souls (1915), The Spice of Life (1916, 1919), Roger Bloomer (1917, 1920, 1923), Success Story (1932) and Gentlewoman (1934). (Lawson's older brother Wendell Holmes Lawson poisoned himself to death in 1922.)
14) Lawson liked burlesque shows.
Regelstein is a middle-aged Jew with a lisp\(^{15}\) that makes his caressing plaintive voice quite ridiculous. Careless about clothes. Slightly unkempt. In midsummer, he wears a coat with a mangy fur collar. Sadie is a sallow-faced kid of seventeen, all dressed up in white, frills calculated to fill out her childish figure.

Regelstein tells Sadie not to look neither to her left neither to her right. These fellows with the wink don’t mean her no good. Ain’t she innocent? As Regelstein kneels down to piece the ten-dollar bill together, Sadie waves a handkerchief at Boob.

MacCarthy, entering with Slop (who says Sadie is the little Yid girl, swelled out thanks to Sanatogen), moves toward the beckoning Sadie, but stumbles on a cobblestone Boob sets before him and sprawls on his “wound.” Slop says maybe Mac’ll find money in the street like the Jew from the delicatessen found a gold mine there.

Green the riveter and his wife Felicite enter. Green is in his Sunday clothes. He is a bully, surly, ill-tempered. Felicite is French. Blonde of rather exotic tired beauty. Face lined with care. Eyes always sparkling.

Mac and Slop explain they’re in uniform to march in the big “peerade.” Regelstein responds to Slop’s previous remark: he used to have a delicatessen, now he has a grocery store, without a mortgage or a loan. A well-to-do business man. Mac says the Yid is so tight he raises cats to sell their fur. Green points out Regelstein gives money to every poor bird outa work in their town. Regelstein calls himself a Yiddish socialist. Regelstein pulls the giggling Sadie away from the giggling Boob.

The offstage music gets louder. There is a noise of tramping feet.

Regelstein wonders what makes the Fourth of July, a great hysterical day, so great. Various voices explain: Washington crossed the Delaware, Declaration of Independence, Columbus discovered America, Pilgrim Fathers. Smith sings: “Darling, I can’t wait. Do I get you now or must I hesitate?” Green asks his French wife what she thinks of this Americana. She likes the noise. Smith beats a terrific volley on his drum. There is general laughter. But in the crowd, Jim, uneasy, is silent.

Tannenbaum enters. He thinks the Greens a touching couple. Mac-

\(^{15}\) In Nirvana (1926) philanthropist Holz has a lisp.
Carthy says get the French girls in bed and they act lubric. Boob asks: "Lubric?" and is chased away. Slop says: "Lubric, sandwich, steam engine."16

Two men enter carrying a huge banner lettered in blue and gold: Tannenbaum Cannery, Pure Meat in Pure Cans. Tannenbaum wants to make a speech to all these people he directly or indirectly employs but he is so touched that words fail him.

Tannenbaum and the banner carriers march out to march music.

Offstage, the peerade is being formed — MacCarthy and Slop and Smith will be at the tail of it as usual.

Smith says: "Listen to them march. Stampin', stampin. Smith asks: "Where is all the feet in the world goin'?" Jim, walking about uneasily, like one in a strange dream, also asks half to himself: "Where to?" Smith replies: "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Which Jim repeats.

MacCarthy recognizes Jim, whom all surround in greeting.

Jim gives an unsafe high laugh: "You guys is good guys. I thought nobody'd know me. A guy from prison is dead." Smith says they're all his pals. Jim repeats: "Pals." Slop asks Jim: "Dangerous socialist?" Jim replies: "Dangerous guy." Jim's been thinking in the dark in them cells. What is a socialist. They ain't. He ain't either. He's looking for someone that knows what a socialist is.

Jim explains how he went to jail.

It happened when they was strikin' down to the Canning Works and the bosses bring in their dirty-bootlickin' militia. "I was comin' down the road with some friends. We were drunk. Why not drink? No harm. But there was them militia lined up across the road with a big flag. We come on, reelin' a little. I came first. An' the guy lowers the flag in my face over me. Like a net on a fish. There I was kickin' and spittin' under them stars and stripes. Down in the mud under the big fat flag. I seen black. I fought my way out. I tore the guts out of them stars an' they sent me up. But it weren't wavin' in the sky — that's the point. (All nod gravely) I says, Hell, Judge. (Jin beats on drum) Judge says, silence. It ain't justice. It's law. Had six months of law. Now gime justice."

16) In his early plays Lawson often uses lines based upon free association.
Slop suggests Jim should've handed the judge some money. But Jim didn't have no money, nor did his ma nor grandma.

“What's a family o' women?” Jim asks. His ma's living in a shack out the vacant lot behind the works. Where they put the garbage. Shack rent free but a place where he wouldn't put a horse. Nor a pig. But a guy's sweet mother. Mebbe the shack's fallen down? Mebbe the old girl's dead? Jim seizes Slop: “She ain't dead, is she?” Slop's seen Jim's mother often. She ain't dead. Jim asks: “White is she?” Slop says she ain't so white. Jim ain't got the heart to go home. Home, how it stinks. Jim breathes deeply: “I need air.”

Slop invites Jim to march in the Fourth of July parade. Smith says people will cheer Jim under the American flag.

MacCarthy says after the parade they're going to a place out Arkville way where there's liquor, not exactly wood alcohol, but it burns your guts. A guy's guts need warmin'. Jim asks if there's women there too. He needs air and he needs a woman. Mac says all the whores have been run out of town. Smith says women will be out later, wearin' them white dresses cut low to the belly button. Jim likes that — he likes to see what he's buyin'.

Jim is supplied with a uniform jacket, a helmet, a pack — which outfit Boob calls a disgrace. Jim says it's pretty hard to disgrace a uniform — just cause it's khaki instead of stripes don't make it no prouder.

Old Pop Pratt wants to march along, but Slop and MacCarthy say he ain't been to their war. Old Pop asks: “What's that about another war?” Smith beats his drum in Pop's ear, and Pop straightens his old body and salutes stiffly. Boob laughs.

To Jim's question, MacCarthy says Boob is a bastard. Slop says Boob was born of a goat. Mac jokes: Old Pop is Boob's father. Pop was seen once lyin' with a goat on a hill. Hard of hearing Old Pop says: “Certainly, hot stuff.” All laugh. Boob says his mother weren't a goat. Jim asks: “Has every guy here got a mother?” Then shut up.

There is silence. Then a long bugle call. March! They march off.

17) In Lawson's early plays many characters make this symbolic statement.
Boob shouts he'll get a bunch of bastards to lick 'em... Old Pop bobs after them, pounding his wooden leg: "I seen 'em blowin' bugles an' beatin' drums but I can't hear nothin'." The brassy music swells. The stage fades to darkness. The music dies gradually "as if it were covered with cotton wadding." The tramp-tramp of marching feet recedes. Act I has ended.

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At this point in the manuscript of the 1921 draft of Acts I and II of Processional, there is a missing scene. But Act II seems to begin in the shack where Jim's mother and grandmother live. The time seems to be after the post-parade drinking indulged in by Jim and the other veterans — a time when Jim apparently discovers his mother has been prostituting herself.

Mrs Flimmins is standing stiff under a sheet. She holds out a gun, which Slop takes. The men lift the sheet off her ceremoniously. Silence. She and Old Maggie go upstairs stiffly in their nightgowns. She tells Jim to sober up.

Jim tragically tells the others to get out. He makes a gesture of despair: "I got no pals. I got nothin'!" He throws the khaki jacket down. Slop picks it up and brushes it sadly.

Smith's drum's no good: "Rip it open. What's in it? Noise!" Smith throws it down. As the men start to get out, Smith stops in the sunlight, takes off a sheet wrapped around him, and gives it to Jim, who buries his face in it.

Psinski says Mrs Flimmins is a great woman. Fire in her. It's women like that who make destinies. Jim wonders if he's Mrs Flimmins's son. Old Maggie, Jim's grandmother, appears at the top of the stairs: "You hurt your mother." Jim laughs coarsely: "Maybe she hurt me." Old Maggie asks: "Where is religion? Where is God?" Jim doesn't know.

Mrs Flimmins comes down stairs: "Let's the three of us get to know each other." Old Maggie mumbles: "Forgive us our trespasses... Give us this day our daily bread." Mrs Flimmins says a lot of daily bread she'll get from God! Old Maggie nods bitterly.

19) This is one of the main questions asked in Nirvana.
Old Maggie insists God will guide them and show them the way. From under the mattress of her bed, she gets a big old Bible.\textsuperscript{20} She puts on spectacles and opens the Bible at random and reads in a vigorous old voice trembling with solemnity: “Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin. Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.”\textsuperscript{21}

Mrs Flimmins says Old Maggie’s stood by her Bible for 80 years. She’s seen war. She’s seen sin. (Old Maggie denies she’s looked at sin.) But she isn’t arrayed like Solomon yet. Unperturbed, Old Maggie points at the sky: “In Heaven, I shall wear cloth of gold at the feet of the Lamb.” (Jim says no sheep is going to tread on him, here or in heaven.) Is Old Maggie sure she’s going to heaven? She asks: “Where else?” (Slop laughs: “Where else?”)

Old Maggie again reads from the Bible: Ye shall honor thy father and mother. Jim rises and brushes away these ideas angrily: “It ain’t so. That’s a bum book. To the ashpile with it. An’ people that reads it.” To the ashpile with God! (Psinski, who has been washing himself vigorously in the background, splashing and blowing, says good, good.) Old Maggie, majestic, with picturesque passion, cries: “Go down into Hell, Jim Flimmins, that has blasphemed the name of God before your mother.”

Mrs Flimmins: “That’s where we’re at. To the ashpile with this family. We ain’t in the procession. We ain’t livin’. we’re dyin’.” (Old Maggie looks over her spectacles: she ain’t dyin’, she’s goin’ up to glory.) Mrs Flimmins says they’ve heard Old Maggie’s Biblical wisdom and God’s; now listen to the wisdom Mrs Flimmins got off the streets, tryin’ to live off nothin’, raisin’ Jim, keepin’ Old Maggie, an’ always nothin’. Then when Jim was old enough to work, there was a war an’ the flags floatin’. Talk about a dream that turns to steel against your belly!

Jim doesn’t care if he ain’t got clothes to his back. Psinski holds up a startling pair of purple drawers, which he gives to Jim. Psinski, swinging an axe, goes off into the sunlight. Mrs Flimmins warns Jim:

Psinski is an anarchist socialist. He’s always washing himself. Why?

\textsuperscript{20} In \textit{Thunder Morning} (1953) Grace Washington has a big old Bible on an end table in her living room.

\textsuperscript{21} The main character of \textit{Success Story} is named Solomon, possibly ironically.
Ain't he a dirty Pole? He pays her only three dollars a week for his bed. He's a machinist; ain't he rich? He saves his money and sends it to Russia.

As for Jim, he was to be one of the rich, was raised for it, fed for it.\(^{22}\) If Jim's never learned a trade, what has that to do with it? Does Old Man Tannenbaum, with his fat face and diamonds, know a trade? Jim says he don't envy Tannenbaum his diamonds. Mrs Flimmins asks: "Don't you?" She can see Jim's eyes shine. Jim says it ain't diamonds in his eyes, it's the shine of the eyes of a cat in the dark: "There's something in me that shines out bright in the dark."\(^{23}\) Jim dunno; he may be an animal.

Mrs Flimmins bursts out: "Beasts!" Nothing to scream about, Jim says, look at his muscle, he could kill a man with his naked hands. Maybe he will. Mrs Flimmins say the three of them are going down the steep road into Hell. Old Maggie concurs: "The sinners is slippin' an' slidin' down the slippery slope."

Mrs Flimmins wonders why Jim ain't a man. Jim says this ain't no place for him. A feller can't kill his own mother. Mrs Flimmins says there's ways of killing. Jim thunders: "If I was away from you women-folk, I'd be a man." Jim'd give his mother his heart's blood, if she wanted it, but his blood ain't warm no more. He's got a headache. Let be. Jim picks up the purple drawers and retires.

Outside it is now blinding bright sunlight, forming a big solid square of light on the ground.

Mrs Flimmins thinks of them neat young men with their hair brushed flat, walking to work and coming home to their mothers — here's a dollar for the milk, mother; here's ten dollars for the rent, mother. Jim sticks his head out from behind a screen: "Here's a kiss for your cheek, mother." That too, Mrs Flimmins says, what does she get of that?

Jim laughs. And he comes out from behind the screen in stocking feet and in the long purple drawers, to confront his mother.

Jim asks: "D'you ever think mebbe I was somethin'?" Maybe he's better than he is. He stands up straight in his purple drawers looking foolish:

\(^{22}\) This hardly seems possible for Jim Flimmins, but it was probably true for Lawson himself.

\(^{23}\) This may be echoing Blake's "The Tiger."
“I'm somebody. I'm proud of myself.” Frightened, Mrs Flimmins says:
“You mean socialism?” Jim scratches his head: he's thinking about socialism; when he decides, he'll be at them with an axe. Mrs Flimmins knows her son: He ain't gonna decide nothin'. Jim admits he's thinking in the dark.

And, Mrs Flimmins says, “the walls fall around us.” Old Maggie says maybe God is against them. Mrs Flimmins: “We're no good. We ain't a family. We're bones.” Jim: “Americans.” Mrs Flimmins: “Guess again. The real Americans is the Jews, the Italians and the Greeks.”

Carrying an axe, Psinski enters the square of sunlight.

Is he an American? Psinski replies: “Ain't we citizens of the world. Ain't there sunlight for all? There's a song says tomorrow there won't be any nations.” He whispers the name of the song, “The Internationale,” and hums the tune. As he waves the axe, gently, the others listen, frightened. Mrs Flimmins screams: “Get out of here. I don't need your money. No freak boarders now. No anarchist boarders. I got my son to work for me. My son that don't sing ghost-like songs. He sings jazz like a man.”

A page of the manuscript is missing.

Psinski amiably asks Jim: “D'you know history? There's been women could read truth out of the clouds and the guts of oxen.” Them times is past, but truth is still with us. “Truth nosin' in the garbage like a mangy dog an' only the old can see when their eyes is blind. Prophecy!” Psinski tells Old Maggie if she was lit, lit with the spirit, she'd speak.

Old Maggie don't see nothin' but blasphemin' fools chasin' their tails round the ruins when they oughter be prayin' in quietness. Psinski says her God's tremblin' in the sky cause he ain't used to seein' people so independent. Maggie says her God don't tremble, he smites. Psinski says he's like God; he don't tremble either, he smites too.

Jim wants to listen to Psinski but Mrs Flimmins tells him to get out; she ain't gonna have him and the other reds meeting at her place. Psinski shouts: Reds. Workers. Workmen that love their work. (Jim: “I ain't like that.” Mrs Flimmins: “All loafers. All GASBAGS.”)

Psinski speaks: “I do not gas. I speak low and serious for the love of all the workers that work in the world with the hard hands, the quick hands,
the strong hands, digging, dynamiting, shifting the delicate machines with the touch of the master. When we are ready, I die for them workers."

Mrs Flimmins figures Psinski don't calculate to be ready to die for the workers soon. Psinski twists his hands in an agony of helplessness.

Phillpotts enters, briskly dressed, amiable, self-assured, speaking in nasal tones.

"Fine bright morning. I'll say it is. (Winks owlishly) My name is John B. Phillpotts. B for Busy. I'm the private secretary of Josias Tannenbaum. Wouldn't you know it to look at me? Private secretary's gloves, neat but not assuming. Cravat, same idea. That's me all over."

The women bow servilely and offer Phillpotts a soapbox to sit on. Jim and Psinski are fixed sullenly like statues. Phillpotts reminds the Flimmins family their "edifice" occupies ground belonging to the Tannenbaum Canning Works and they are not paying rent for it. Eviction faces the Flimmins family. Psinski says he sees dirt in Phillpotts eye and asks:

"If I walked down Washington Street in my skin an' hairy, what would you say?" Phillpotts: "I'd say that bird is a philosopher." Psinski: "That's me, the philosopher with the naked soul." Phillpotts: "And if I was to go swimming in a dress suit, a black suit with the stiff whites front like the angels wear..."? Psinski: "I'd say that guy knows a joke but he's gonna drown." Phillpotts: "That's me the humorist drowning in the big sea."

Jim, swinging the axe casually, approaches Phillpotts, who reminds everyone Jim was in jail. Psinski claims Jim went to jail for his ideas, but Jim says that's a lie, he doesn't have any ideas, he went to jail on account of booze. Phillpotts says that's good, he's sick of ideas, but he understands booze: booze makes the brotherhood of man. When Psinski calls him a joker, Phillpotts says:

"Can I help it? Is it my fault if I come here with the happy smile and the snickering face to throw an American family on the street? This is Tannenbaum's like everything else — hes ays he can't have a man from prison on it. Bad moral example. Out, out." Phillpotts changes his manner abruptly: "How do you know if my heart's bleeding or not?" Psinski asks if Phillpotts' heart is so important.

Phillpotts orders the family off the premises. He says Jim'll make
them a home elsewhere. There's always a man's job for a man. He suggests Jim join the Navy.

Old Maggie goes down on her knees to the Almighty. She prays Tannenbaum will open his heart to God's word. Phillpotts says: Fat chance. Psinski thinks God and the rich are so close together it's hard to tell which is which.

Phillpotts says the eviction is because Jim insulted the American flag. Stealing would be different. Jim says they don't want the damn shanty anymore anyway. It's home sweet home to his mother, but to him it's no stinking good and it's falling down.

According to Phillpotts, the shanty's going to be turned into a little model cottage to rent at $50 a month to some poor worker that can't afford it. In business Phillpotts does not lose time, so he beckons in two men carrying a tin bathtub and a third with pipes and fixtures. Plumbing is a symbol of modern civilization.

Jim insists the shanty will not stand. He would do for it with an axe. In fact, one hard heave with his shoulder would topple it. Psinski: Toppling, tottering — the houses is fallin'!" Phillpotts: "Like lot of bigger houses." Psinski: "All of us pushin' down the old houses, laughin' to see 'em fall."

Phillpotts warns Jim before he laughs he'd better decide where he's going. Jim says they'll wrap up everything they've got in a blanket and go. As for him, he'll creep into some hole. Sincerely and without sarcasm, he says, Phillpotts hopes Jim makes good. How? He winks. Patriotism. Heh, heh.

Jim says the next time he goes to jail, it won't be for the flag, it may be for murder. Phillpotts wonders if Jim gets so much satisfaction out of killing. Psinski says there's another way — the way of the workers mastering the world, slowly, bloodlessly, relentlessly, because they control the means of production. Where will Phillpotts be?: 'I'll be your private secretary, because the nature of man does not change.'

Three workers in blue overalls appear. Psinski greets comrades Malucci, Muller, and Pat, who invites Phillpotts, the spy of Tannenbaum, to attend their meeting. Psinski prevents a fight between Phillpotts and Pat.

24) In *Marching Song* (1937) a working class woman is named Mrs. Malucci.
“We ain't touchin' you / Psinski says to Phillpotts / . We know what you want. You want to be beaten up so you can have somethin' on us. So you can go cryin' to your Boss an' lock us up for violence. Hit me. I won't touch you. An' I got witnesses.”

Phillpotts' excitement increases the nasality of his voice:

“Did it ever occur to you you're putting me in a false light? You can beat me to a frazzle. You can do me to an omelette. Come on, all of you. I'll hit back, but I won't whimper to anybody. Spy, me? What you say here I wouldn't repeat it to God himself. First, because I'm a gentleman. Second, because I'm a goddam good socialist.”

Jim is with Phillpotts. Who wants to fight both of them? Even though Phillpotts just put him out of his house and just told him to go to Hell, when a guy talks white, Jim's with him. Besides, Jim likes a fight.

Muller says Phillpotts knows all Tannenbaum's secrets: “Why don't you put us on to something useful?” Phillpotts says he plays them fair and he plays his Boss fair. Psinski says he plays him safe. Phillpotts nods: “Why wouldn't I? What have I to gain by waving a red flag? Not me.” He produces a small silk neatly folded handkerchief and smiling gently waves it open into an American flag. All back away rather frightened. “That scares you, doesn't it?”

Psinski calls the flag the badge of slavery. Phillpotts says: “To you and to me — because we laugh — a symbol of my point of view. I wave it when the necessity arises. In private I blow my nose in it.” Jim says they sent him to jail for less.

Mallucci says if they tell that to the Boss, Phillpotts won't be no private secretary no more.

“Wrong again!” Phillpotts says. “I told him myself just like I tell you.” What did the Boss do? “He laughed till he fell off his chair and rocked himself to sleep on the floor.” If they want to own the world, they'd better know the substance of it first. The Boss says he's a Socialist himself. The fat boss. Meat Packer. Slave driver. He's a socialist himself — where his own skin isn't concerned. That's the last joke!

Psinski wants to know where the men are who ain't afraid for their skins. Phillpotts responds: “What man loves his mother like his own body, that's him. We love our skins. We all have our little handker-
chiefs. Don’t forget the symbol.” Psinski says: “We ain’t afraid for our skins because our skins is less valuable.”

Phillpotts tells Psinski: “Do what you want with your own carcass. Show me the will of man walking like a conqueror. Show me the slaves marching to victory. Why if the workers had any nerve they’d be running every vital industry long ago. Show me. I’ve seen a lot. I’m waiting for a lot more. Show me.”

Phillpotts exits.

The workers are very uncomfortable. Psinski says they must get to work. They talk too much. What is talk? Mallucci says Phillpotts done him up good: “I got no heart for nothin!” Psinski says if that’ll get Mallucci, he never did have a heart. Muller shakes his fist at Phillpotts: “Fool!” Psinski says Phillpotts ain’t a fool, he speaks a hunk o’ truth. Are they afraid of the truth? He ain’t. Muller repeats Phillpotts is a cackling fool. Psinski disagrees: “No, comrade, it is a very intelligent men, him, it is on such men we must rely.” Pat says: “God help us!”

Psinski speaks: “I do not despair. I see his raw soul. It is a bloody good soul. It is you that are fools. You would remake America and you do not know America.” What we gonna do? “Do we strike? I got a guy comin’ here from the building trade to report. I got Regelstein comin’ because he’s rich an’ he’ll extend us credit for food. We gotta discuss it. Do we strike?”

Psinski takes Jim by the shoulder: “Here’s another American that has suffered what the law can make him suffer. A martyr what don’t know he’s a martyr. Comrade Flimmins, what you say?” (Jim says: “Nothin’.”) “Good,” Psinski says. “He went to jail an’ he says nothin’. He is a man. He worked down to the canning works. They took his job from him an’ they took his house from him. Are we gonna strike today for this guy an’ ourselves?”

Mallucci recalls: “We didn’t get nothin’ six months ago.” Muller says: “Law courts ain’t our business.” Pat says: “Mebbe jail done Jim good.” Jim says jail made him think. Mallucci wants to know what do they get

25) In Marching Song one of the causes of the big strike is the eviction of a worker.
if they strike. What does he get? Psinski says every strike is a means of solidarity. Pat asks: "What is solidarity for?" Psinski answers: "Gettin' us closer together for the big last battle." Mallucci shudders: "You mean blood?" He was at Chateau Terry and don't want to see no more blood.

Psinski speaks: "Did you ever think there was battles without blood? without noise? The worst battles ever fought was done in dark places alone, over quiet tables with a piece of paper under a lamp. When the soul fights the soul. When the idea fights the idea. When a guy rises up and says I seen the truth. Come one, come all, and hang on to the truth.

If Psinski means the rights of the proletariat, Mallucci is with him, but if he means tear up the Constitution of the United States, nothin' doin'. Psinski wants to know: How you gonna have one without the other?" Can the truth and the lie sleep in the same bed? Psinski knows the Constitution by heart.

"The Constitution was made by guys who never heard of machinery. What good is it in a country where the factory is the center of life? Put it on a shelf. Put the old lies on a shelf. This is one of them times in History when Truth is loose. Truth is a mangy dog barkin' in the streets at night."

Mallucci says: "If we strike, we'd oughter get at least two cents an hour raise." Psinski's manner suddenly changes: "Would you like to throw out Old Tannenbaum an' run the works ourselves on a strictly cooperative basis, every man takin' his fair share of profit?" Mallucci fears there might not be no profit. Psinski says if there weren't no profit, the meat packers would withdraw all credits. Mallucci gesticulates in excitement: "Who pay?" Psinski: "Every man work till he starve for nothln' for the good of the factory, to get our factory goin'." Pat is for that

26) One of Lawson's books is entitled Film in the Battle of Ideas.
27) One of Lawson's last plays, People and Citizens is a defense of progressive Constitutional values.
28) In Success Story Sol Ginsburg succeeds in throwing out the boss of his advertising agency and running the works himself but does not give others a fair share of the profits.
because he wants to see the works run good; it ain't so good now because the Boss ain't efficient. Pat would be more efficient because he knows canning. Tannenbaum is making his profits off' n rotten meat.\(^2^9\)

Psinski contradicts: "It's good meat." He knows because "Union Number 42 hired a detective and investigated. The slaughterhouse is clean. It ain't the meat that's bad. It's the money. It ain't cows we gotta worry about. It's men. Men bein' murdered all over the world so's rotten worry about. Men bein' murdered all over the world so's rotten money can multiply its rottenness."

What would Psinski care if money was abolished. "Money's no good one way or another way except when it means labor. Money is sweat. A dollar without sweat is surplus value. Down with Surplus Value. When I get a dollar and I'm tired, it's a good thing. When the dollar pays the tired hand, it is beautiful. I want to make every dollar in America beautiful."

Are they ready to take over the canning works tomorrow, for efficiency and decency? "Don't you see this whole damn country is one canning works. We got to take it all. Cooperation or nothin'. A man must own his own tools. Freight cars an' spades an' hydraulic pumps — them is tools. We use 'em, we own 'em. The Proletariat."

Old Maggie interrupts:

"What are them words? Proletariat? Surplus Value? Soviet? God never spoke them words. They're buzzin' in my ears. They ain't English. They're unholy. They're made by the Devil down in Hell. Proletariat — it burns in your mouth. What is it? Will I go mad hearin' those words?"

Psinski says others has gone mad hearin' 'em. Old Maggie says: "Him too you made mad, my son that was an upright man."\(^3^0\)

Psinski asks the men: "Do we take the strike vote for socialization?" Mallucci adds: "And two cents an hour." Muller: "But no revolutionary strikes." Psinski: "Any strike is a revolutionary strike." Pat wants to get that straight. Psinski asks: "What is straight? For what do you strike? For what are you a rebel?" Pat strikes for cleaner working conditions —

\(^2^9\) Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) was published when Lawson was about twelve years old.

\(^3^0\) Old Maggie's son, apparently Jim's father, does not appear in the play
he's a moral man. Muller strikes for pull in politics. Mallucci strikes for cash.\(^{31}\)

Psinski answers them all, from his heart's blood, fiercely:

“You say money. What you want with the money? I tell you plain. In the good weeks I make forty dollars an' I live on ten. The rest I put in the bank to save for the need of the party. I send to Colorado. I send to Pennsylvania. You get more money now than your sneakin' work is worth.

“Politics, is it? What D'you wanna grub in that swill for? If we don't strike for a reason an' a purpose an' if we don't say it plain, we ain't no more'n slaves an' hogs. What man can stand up an' say he got a social conscience?”

There is silence as Jim comes to the center, awkwardly:

“I ain't got that, but I know what you mean 'cause I been down low. Always low in the mud, thinkin'. I been in prison. I come in an' I want out now. (In hoarse agony) Gimme a red flag to wave. (Jim spits)

Psinski comments: “There is a man what is a rebel made out of the sweat of the circumstance, an' his guts is the guts of a man. Him I shake the hand. The rebel.” Jim, embarrassed, clears his throat and spits.

Green enters in blue uniform and sullenly says: “You guys can't do nothin' without us building trade unionmen. We're building the new works over to Cedar Hill. If we walk out, you win. If we don't, you lose.”

Psinski says Green's guys got solidarity. Green says the building trade is always ready for a strike. Mallucci says that's because they get so much pay they don't care whether they work or not. “Rich you guys is — and you'd oughter help the proletariat when it needs you.” Green ain't deaf, so tells Mallucci not to shout. Anyway, where was the proletariat when the bricklayers struck? “You was yeller.” Mallucci justifies: “We're paid bad. We don't save nothin'. We can't walk out every day a bunch of total strangers says Go.” Green suggests his union members will stay strangers.

Psinski also notes Green's union is rich and organized. And Pat says Green's got a house fitted up elegant, a bungalow, with a bathroom inside.

31) Psinski asks if Mallucci's a wop why he talks like a Jew.
Green says he's an American; he ain't one of their dirty foreigners. Green means wops. Mallucci calls him bourgeois. Green says he and his pals ain't rich. He's got a small house, which he can't afford. He's looking for boarders.

Psinski asks Green to take in Jim as a boarder. Jim ain't on his feet, needs help; if Jim don't pay, the union will. Green wants to know what's eatin' Jim, ain't he healthy? Green don't want no jailbird around his wife. Jim confronts Green. Psinski asks: “Ain't we humane?” Green says: “If you got time to be humane, go ahead.” Green agrees to rent the Flimmins family one room in his house — a bit of smell from the town dump when the wind's wrong but a neat house. Mrs Flimmins must do the housework (except the cooking) because Green's wife ain't strong. Green's wife is French, but he wants to make sure the Flimminses are Americans not foreigners.

Green then recognizes Mrs Flimmins and says the deal is off. Psinski continues defending Jim. Jim's been to jail for all of them. It's not only Jim. Many are in jail. Eugene Victor Debs. Green says: “Don't put the name of Debs alongside the name of a loafer. Debs ain't a criminal. He's a hero.”

Psinski says their chance to be heroes is comin' like next Spring is comin'.

"Hear me! I preach the unknown heroes that suffer without no purpose an' die without no excuse. Eugene Debs is in jail. Jack Reed is dead. Who's left versus the millions sprinkled like dust on the world. Thousands has died for us. Are we gonna show 'em men ain't worth the sacrifice? No. Not while the unknown heroes is ready an' willin'. The heroes that ain't got brains or a voice, but their guts is the guts of a man."

Regelstein and his daughter Sadie appear outside in the sunlight. Sadie wears a blue dress with two foolish necklaces of heavy fake pink coral. Regelstein pats her on the head and enters the shack. Outside, Sadie stands foolishly, first on one foot the other, in the blinding sunshine. Inside, Regelstein consults a large watch:

"Boys, my time is valuable. Psinski has asked me here to a meeting be-

32) Psinski does not comprehend Green's recognition of Mrs Flimmins as a prostitute.
cause he wouldn't do nothin' without my advice, me bein' a well-to-do man and a Yiddish socialist. Is it a strike or ain't it? If it is, I'm with you. If it ain't, I'm with you."

Regelstein ain't got time for details. He's walking his daughter to school. Last year high school already — would you think it to look at her? And a bright girl too. Outside in the sunlight Sadie is looking foolish.

Regelstein sits on a box and spreads his legs importantly. They're all friends; they can call each other by their right names and have a nice social time.

Psinski violently says: "This strike ain't the social time. We stay out mebbe a week. It may be all winter." Regelstein's enthusiasm wanes: "But I'm a storekeeper, I ain't an agitator." Psinski says guys'll be starvin' and they'll need credit. For Regelstein them kind of customers is like the rats that eats the oatmeal. He's a thinking man. Ain't his ideas good enough without his credit? Psinski says they don't want ideas, they want the heart with them. Regelstein expands: "When you say the heart, I hear you."

Mallucci says they ain't there to listen to no sermons from a storekeeper. Green don't want no Jew messin' up in no strike with him. Regelstein asks if he's there to be insulted, adding being democratic is like gambling: You gotta know who you're with.

Regelstein wishes the boys luck and goes out to Sadie, whom he won't allow inside because she's too Goddam good for men who use Goddam profanity. Regelstein raises Sadie and watches her like you'd watch a sick lamb. When she goes out, it's to a social party, where they dance genteel with a fox trot, but no pushing or fighting.

Mallucci says he's seen Sadie in the cemetery alovin' up a travelling salesman. Regelstein jumps up and screams: "Liar!" Pat repeats: "Where's she spend her evenings?" Voices say: "Ask her. Ask her." Regelstein cries: "Leave my pure daughter be."

Jim pushes Regelstein aside and grabs Sadie and lifts her up and carries her center. Sadie screams. Regelstein mutters with excitement. Jim plunks Sadie down near the footlights. Regelstein calls Jim a jailbird and says he'll get Jim back to prison. A father can hate. Jim carelessly sings: "Ashes to ashes an' dust to dust — I can't wait, do I get you now, or must I hesitate?" Sadie sways to the tune. Sadie becomes breath-
less: “Ain’t he strong?” She sticks a finger in her mouth. She sways.

Psinski says it serves Regelstein right for talkin’ lies about purity an’ Sadie bein’ an angel. Ain’t it natural Jim’d pick her up to see the wings on her back? Psinski ain’t got no use for lyin’ morals. “What’s a woman? It’s a stomach an’ a heart an’ a head.” There are other parts, but never mind. Sure, her father feeds her, but her head an’ her heart is against him, are calling out. It’s flesh. If you don’t know it, you get it in the neck more and more.

Regelstein speaks: “Pester me like flies ’cause I’m a single man an’ I got a family. Old-fashioned I am an’ I stand on morals. Can you get on without the butter ’n eggs in my store? Can you get on without the pickles an’ the canned fish? Where’s your strike without the Yiddish grocery that you come to beggin’?”

Regelstein tells Sadie to come away from these anarchists. Mallucci: “That’s a lie.” Pat: We’re organized socialists.” Muller: “We got solidarity and discipline.”

Regelstein goes on: “I’m sick at the stomach with you. Pester, will you now? A man that’s got money in the bank to buy and sell all of you. I got a family what stands. Muss my daughter’s dress, I buy her a new dress. When the time comes, I buy her a wedding outfit with bells on it that’ll frighten you. I got a family that stands!”

Regelstein pulls Sadie away, but she waves to Jim, who waves back.

Psinski says Jim makes enemies quick: “You run hot and cold. The fire in you frightens me.” Psinski, too, is like that, he says. He then orders his comrades to get ready for their strike.

Then delivery boy Boob and housewife Felicite erupt into the scene violently.

Breaking through the group, running wildly, Boob enters, carrying a basket of vegetables in one hand. He is pursued by Felicite, who carries a feather duster.33) At the center, Boob stops, makes an obscene gesture, and jumps up

33) The Fat Landlady in Roger Bloomer tickles Roger with a feather duster apparently symbolizing erotic stimulation.
and down like a marionette.\textsuperscript{34) Felicite screams." Pat laughs. Mallucci and Muller dive for Boob, who dodges, and they bump heads. Boob circles, pursued by Felicite. Boob throws a cabbage at Mallucci from the landing. Felicite calls it a bomb. Jim smiles sadly and picks it up and weighs it in his hand. From the landing Boob throws potatoes, carrots. The men shield themselves. As Felicite advances upstairs boldly, Boob throws a bag of flour at her. Covered by flour, she advances, puffing.

Mrs Flimmins appears on the landing. Boob, caught between her and Felicite, jumps — and is caught by Green in an iron grip.

Mrs Flimmins says Boob is a curse. Felicite says she will kill him, but Psinski restrains her, and Green warns Psinski to leave his wife be. Boob tries to skip away, but Jim catches him.

Felicite says Boob's got $25 in his mouth which he stole from her kitchen table. Psinski tells Boob to open his face, but Boob, grimly silent, sets his jaws. Green shakes Boob and gives him one minute, then he's going to get hit, "an' you ain't gonna know no more till you wake up dead." Mrs Flimmins says to turn Boob upside down and shake him. Jim says Boob's hardboiled. Green tries to force Boob's mouth open with a hammer. Boob opens his mouth, and Jim plunges hand in, then Felicite does: "He bite me!" Boob swallows the money. Boob says: "You guys is stronger, but I'm slicker. I'm slick enough to be rich." Psinski says: "You raise a kid to be slick an' he swallows money on you."

Green throws Boob down: "You're gonna have time to think about who's slick." Green and Muller set the bathtub over Boob. Jim laughs, so does Pat. On the inside of the tub Boob bangs hard. Boob's banging gets weaker, and Green guesses he taught Boob what he won't forget.

Psinski speaks: "Sure, you taught him to be a good thief. All right. He might be lots of things that wouldn't be so fine. A good thief is something. Under that piece of tin, a feller is plannin', laughin', plannin' to rob the bank, to take the gold ball off'n the State House dome. You've taught him to hate organized activity. Hear'rn kickin'. That's the rumble of another rebel."

\textsuperscript{34) At one point in \textit{The Mad Moon} Tommy Weed and Priscilla Emerson bob up and down like Punch and Judy.}
Boob's banging ceases. Felicite fears Boob can't breathe. Green says: "Let 'im die."

Mrs Flimmins continues packing. Jim says he's gonna look for some gutter in town where his mother can lay her head. At Green's curiosity that she is Jim's mother, Mrs Flimmins says she ain't ashamed of it. Green says he ain't ashamed of his wife neither. Mrs Flimmins laughs harshly. Felicite asks why Mrs Flimmins laughs at her. Mrs Flimmins says: "We got secrets."

Secrets that's spun out from mothers to sons. "Them is our hates." What would Felicite know? In France, people don't hate because they don't have no morals. Green objects: His wife's got morals, an' when she ain't, he teaches her morals with his fist.

A little later, Felicite cautiously goes to the tub covering Boob and tries unsuccessfully to raise it. Boob may be dead under there. Sadie tremulously says Boob's her feller: "Ain't he gonna love me no more?"

Both lift the 'tub. Boob is lying on his back, legs crossed, smoking the butt of a cigarette. Felicite was frightened, thinking of death, but Boob says she doesn't know Americans: "It's all kiddin' in the U. S. A."

Boob now admits he has the stolen money in his stomach. Swallowing money isn't a crime, it's smartness. Boob slaps his hollow chest: "The Senate is where a man goes who can swallow coin."

Felicite calls Boob and Sadie children of fire. Children born in the night among stars. Boob confronts Felicite. Is she going to tell them all over town he's a thief? Tell 'em.

"You all hate me," Boob says. "An' I laugh. You hate me because of what I know, an' what I know I keep in my head, an' when I speak out things begin to bust. I could tell you about your old man and what I seen 'im doin', an' I got a mind to, Ask your old man where he was last night. In the graveyard." Boob was sitting in a shadow in the graveyard where they goes to make love. He was watching quiet like a fox. They was sittin' across each other. An' she says be quick now, my leg's asleep. Then they both sighed sort of cruel.

Felicite knew about this, but why should Boob tell her? Boob says there's a lot of kidding in that town.

Felicite says: "We are so tangled in our sorrow." She controls a sob. "Oh,
it’s not what you tell me about my husband. What should I care? It is my fear of you others, you whom I do not know.” Strangers. Sadie tries to comfort her, but Felicite says: “Don’t touch me. You are too cold, you who laugh and whisper. You all know dirty secret things and you whisper. It must be religion. I can’t stand it. Oh, America of the liars, I hate you.”

Boob and Sadie exit, but Jim enters and prevents Felicite from leaving. He wants to look at her; he ain’t seen a pretty woman for so long. Felicite says Jim’s worse than the others. They whisper. He shouts. She says inside Jim is beating like a drum calling people to come across the hills. Inside he’s shouting loud. She can can see his flesh quiver. Jim quietly says: “Us with the animal eyes that see in the dark.”

Green enters. He is surly and angry. He’s got a gun, he says, for fellers that talk to his wife. He’s got a medal for him alone rippin’ up six Germans in a trench. He’s done his duty to his country. Jim says bragging about medals ain’t popular around there. Jim ain’t never killed a white man in war and peace: “When I shoot, I shoot Chinamen an’ niggers.”

Felicite excitedly says: “Kidding. Why do you lie so to one another? Are you both cowards so to talk about guns? You in America talk so much and mean so little. We of France, whose hearts have a purpose, cannot understand.”

Green grabs his wife in an angry grip: “What’s the purpose of your heart?” Green ain’t jealous, he just makes things clear. To Felicite it is not clear: “Is it the union of tenderness, this? Oh, if you would beat me, knock me down, so that I may know I am alive. Beat me. Do anything that feels.” Green says he don’t feel; anyway, he don’t feel that way.

Felicite goes on: “Are we alive? You talk and you mean nothing. Are you so afraid of truth that your words are the wheezing of fools? Do you hate? Will you not fight? Will you not tear the hair and draw blood from the strong muscles?”

Boob sticks his head out from around a corner, then jumps in, waving his arms and cackling. Jim darts at him. Boob dodges and runs out. Jim pursues him.

Felicite and Green talk to each other.
Felicite suggests they tell each other the truth. Green accuses her of trying to get him into a fight with the stronger Jim to finish him. Felicite laughs: How would she know how strong Jim is? Has she felt his iron arms around her? Green trembles: What is she to him that he’d fight for her? He’s tired of the sight of her. (In a mirror, Felicite is tired of herself.) He’s not a woman’s guy — maybe not one woman’s, anyway.

Felicite tells Green to take another woman. Go and buy a woman. Take her to a graveyard. Why should Felicite mind? Green says she’s got no more morals than a rabbit. She calls him a liar and a coward for not telling he was in the graveyard the night before, sitting across each other in the grassy dew. “I am a woman. When you crept into bed, trembling and sweating, I smelled the bad strong perfume. I know the prostitutes smell, the perfume of the whore ready for sin.” Green says Felicite’s rotten all through, she’s got a rotten mind. American women ain’t so dirty smart. Felicite hysterically cries: “Truth!”

Jim carries in the kicking, screaming Boob. Green accuses Jim of telling Felicite about the woman in the graveyard. Boob shrills: “A whore in a graveyard laid across a stone.35) Boob seen what he seen. He seen the lovers fuckin’ on the graves, an’ some was livin’ and and some was dead.

Mrs Flimmins enters with a box full of the family belongings. Boob points a finger at her. Breathlessly, with a choking catching breath, he says: “She’s the whore that lies across the stones.”

There is silence. Jim drops Boob on the ground. Boob runs away from all the desolate faces. Mrs Flimmms walks with slow dignity. Felicite grabs the fringe of her skirt: “Lemme smell and I’ll tell you all.”

At this point in the manuscript, six pages are missing.

The narrative continues as Jim speaks with his mother.

Jim says he was sick in jail, not just sick, not what you call nice. He guesses it was that cemetery woman, mebbe not, he dunno. With hysterical tenderness, Mrs Flimmins says he’s got to get well. Somehow she’ll get money. She understands. She’ll look after him fine, more’n a nurse. Ain’t

35) In In Praise of Learning war veteran Ben Marlowe guiltily recalls having sex with a teenage prostitute on the fallen stones of an Italian church bombed out by German airplanes during World War II.
disease a curse? But it ain't so much. Both laugh calmly.

Green appears, then Psinski, waving his arms and shouting: "The big strike. They're strikin' for fair play. They're strikin' for work."

From the top of the stairs, there is a stifled sob. Old Maggie doubled sideways rolls straight down the stairs. Jim and his mother bend over Old Maggie, who pushes them away: "Don't touch me with your unclean hands." There's blood in her eyes that'll help her to see God. Old Maggie rises unsteadily to her feet.

Old Maggie speaks: "Away. My head has opened like a flower garden. My head is an earthquake in a flower garden. Worms and blood and blasting fire are on the earth to blacken it. It's comin'. The cloud is comin', black, 'cause the good white God is sick. He lay with a mortal woman an' he got sick with sin."

Mrs Flimmins fears people will hear, so Jim and Psinski close the swinging doors at the back and bar them. The room is now grey dark, but light filters in through cracks in the wall. All gather around Old Maggie curiously but at a safe distance.

Old Maggie softly says: "The black cloud is a blessin' an' the black fire... Come away, out of the fallin' houses. Come away to the fields the rain o' God wet in our hair an' his thunder in our ears." She wants to shout to God standin' on a pile of garbage as high as the moon. Old Maggie, her arms drooping to her sides, tiredly says: "Hurrah" and sinks to her knees.

Green says all the Flimminses are mad. They ain't a family. They're a garbage heap.

Jim is gonna finish with Green, then with the house, then with the town. He's strong and he's ready for anything. Psinski suggests Jim's ready for the brotherhood of man: "D'ya ever hear The Internationale?" Green says he heard it once in a whorehouse. Jim asks if his, Jim's, mother was there. Jim hums the tune of The Internationale and swings his axe. Green picks up a broken drum and smashes it over Jim's head. The drum makes a hollow sound.

36) Similarly hectic acrobatic action is found in Loud Speaker.
37) Lawson's The International was produced in 1928.
Everybody stands away from Jim, who swings the axe angrily. Jim, the drum covering him to the shoulders, moves about gropingly, then runs to the wall and starts hacking away at it. Boards begin to fall around him. Through the hole he makes, sunlight pours in on his muscular figure.

More boards fall. Parts of the wall give way. The whole structure trembles drunkenly. There is the dull crash of timber. Jim throws down the axe. He tears the drum off his sweating head. He and his mother raise Old Maggie from her knees and carry her, her legs flapping, out into the sunlight.

The second act of John Howard Lawson's second draft of Processional ends.

A Biographical Note:
This note is based entirely on two different chapters ("Quai de la Tournelle" and "The View from the Seine") in two different versions of John Howard Lawson's unpublished autobiography, parts of which his daughter Susan Amanda Lawson has kindly permitted me to read. This note closely follows Lawson's own language, although often without the use of quotation marks.

In late January 1920 John Howard Lawson's business agent Mary Kirkpatrick sold his The Spice of Life (1916, 1919, unpublished) to Famous Players-Lasky (later Paramount Pictures) for $5,000. Lawson and his wife of a few months Kate Drain Lawson quickly took a French ship to France. On board ship, Lawson wrote a line of dialogue for Roger Bloomer (begun in France in 1917): "I want to do something with my hands, day-laborer, I want to get down in the brown earth and dig." He himself, of course, intended to live the life of an artist in Paris.

The Lawsons lived at 45 Quai de la Tournelle for about two years. He began to write with an energy he had never known. He read (not for the first time) Freud and Frazer. He sided with the Dada-ists in their controversy with the Cubists — the Nihilism of Dada appealed to him. He rejected conventional theatre, but he could not imagine the revolutionary form not yet invented that would revitalize the drama.

38) Lawson began to write his autobiography, which he unfortunately left unfinished, in the early or mid 1960s, when he was in his 70s, fifty years or more after he began to write Processional.
But during his first months in Paris in 1920 his understanding of the theatre was enriched. In particular, he was impressed by Lenormand's Les Rates and Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps. From the two he molded a rough style that seemed to promise a new kind of excitement or revelation. Le Sacre du Printemps, for him the only modern work which attained the emotional splendor of total theatre, had a direct effect on Lawson's style in its combination of music, dance, pantomime, rising to climactic fury in the strident rhythm and wild ritual of the blood sacrifice.

"The bold scheme of Processional was in my mind," Lawson writes, "but I was not yet able to bring it to the surface or crystallize its sound and fury in action on a stage. I could not create a plot structure which gave the characters an organic place in the social situation. I did not know what I wanted to say about the American background in its effect on these specific people. They were energetic puppets, but they did not suffer and live.

"I tried to develop a young woman who would be a foil to the young girl. The older woman seems to represent emotional adjustment or sublimation of the primal instincts which drive the other characters. Felicite was destined to disappear, but she was central to my first approach to Processional: her response to the raw violence and moral confusion of the Americans was designed to provide a comment on the action, a sort of sublimation. She represented old world wisdom, a patient and mocking sense of life, which counterpointed the raw intensity of the Americans."

Lawson's feeling about Felicite (whom he modelled in part on a French woman he and his wife knew) arose from his illusions about France. "I doubt, he writes, whether her counterpart could have been found in all of France. At all events, she had no more connection with the United States than I had with France."

Lawson had intended to build the climax of the play around Felicite's tragic inability to cope with the American situation and her realization at the moment of her death that it embodies a new and more vibrant life. But there was something false in this concept that made it impossible for Lawson to write words for Felicite to speak. "The deep trouble lay in my attempt to bring my feeling about Europe into the play. What I felt about Europe was self-deception."

In his old age, Lawson could not explain why this inadequate character represented something so essential to him that he could not cut her from his pages without feeling that he was drawing blood. She haunted him and refused to die. She came back in a play called Saga Center at the end of the 1920s but again she proved unmanageable and Lawson abandoned
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that play.

The woman as life force or interpreter was an idealized figure who could not be given any semblance of life, but a recurrent theme in Lawson's plays is an opposition between an older and a younger woman.39) "I have no explanation of this continuing pattern, nor do I think that any glib analysis, psychoanalytical or otherwise, could get to its roots. It may go back to my childhood and the loss of my mother.40) The tangle of feelings which surrounded Processional was intensely personal. I could not solve the play, because I could not tolerate the limitations of my daily life. Everything I hated in the routine of living was associated with my marriage. But I did not want to break away and I certainly was not about to get down and dig in the earth — this idiotic suggestion."

The only answer was travel. After completing the first draft of Processional (Act I only), Lawson went to Rome, Palermo, Trieste and Vienna. In Vienna, Lawson tried to see Freud,41) but Freud was not there. Lawson fled back to Paris.

In July and August 1920, newspapers had reported the strike of coal miners in Mingo County, West Virginia. There were murders and pitched battles. Most of the miners were Americans, some Negro workers, and a few thousand Italian and Polish immigrants. President Harding sent in federal troops. A grand jury charged 200 miners with conspiracy and indicted 325 others for treason. These events had inspired Lawson to begin the first draft of Processional.

"I did not want to write a documentary study of these events," Lawson writes. "But the strike gave me the setting for a ritual of primitive fury: the proud mountain people who had been in this area for more than a century were projected into an alliance with Negro and foreign-born workers. This gave the play a historical texture."

Processional, finished in France, could not have been produced as it was, but Lawson considered it his "love poem" to the United States. Anyway, he decided to return to the United States to find out if he could get a production of Processional.

(Received May 9 1980)

39) Similarly, in the 1920 draft of Roger Bloomer, the relationship between Janet and Louise. (Like Felicite, Janet was dropped from the final version of Roger Bloomer.)
40) Lawson's mother died when he was seven years old.
41) Lawson says that when he finished the first draft of Processional he was on the verge of collapse.