

June 27, 1935

My dear Miss McAllister:

I am sorry that I have let your letter of last January asking for impressions of Mr. White go so long. I have been badly driven for the last few months, but I should have answered earlier if I had not found it difficult to write about a friend. I am afraid it is impossible for me to answer in detail the questions you ask. How can one dissect a friend?

I have known Mr. White since he first appeared at the office of McClure's Magazine, eagerly awaited there as the author of the best short stories we had had for many a day - the Boyville stories. He was new to New York then and a little city-shy or at least wanted us to think him so. It fell to me to go around with him frequently, show him the town, and you can imagine what a delightful companion he was. He judged New York by Kansas standards. I am afraid we didn't stand up very well. He has always had since I knew him a passionate affection for Emporia and her ways and he never let one forget it. I have always loved that in him.

That affection and loyalty to Kansas, his appreciation and understanding of everything that she does, wise and foolish, is what has made him so valuable as a National journalist.

You ask what I consider his strongest point. I rather think it is that he has always known where he belonged, appreciated the place where he belonged, tried to interpret it. He comes out strongest in my mind as a newspaper man. From none of his writings do I get more pleasure than his collection of editorials, though he is a fine novelist and "A Certain Rich Man" is one of the best of its period.

You ask me what I think of him as a politician. I never thought much of him as a politician. I suppose that is because I frequently have not been sympathetic with his party, he being a Republican and I a Democrat, that is for the most part a Democrat. But he is the kind of a Republican newspaper man that gives pointers to the opposition which they can never afford to miss. If I were in National politics as a Democrat I should read White's editorials every day of my life.

As to the "too great versatility" which you suggest - I don't think so. A newspaper man, that is a newspaper man who is both editor and reporter, must be versatile. Will White gets a lot of fun out of life, dipping into various things and it is reflected in his writing.

I would want him along if I were going to go on a pleasure cruise with a dozen of America's public men. I couldn't conceive that such an aggregation could be made a pleasure cruise but if anybody would save its gaiety it would be Will White.

No, I don't believe he would make a good President. I can't think of him as a President or as an executive and I think it would be a crime to put him in office. He is a great newspaper man who has had the sense and stability to recognize that there was no better field in this country for shaping public opinion than just where he lives.

You ask if "the heavy-duty moralizing" which crops out in White's fiction is a concession to his audience. Not by any means. He was born and bred with a sense of his duty to decent morals. He knows that that is what holds the country to steadiness and responsibility, that to get away from that would be like pulling the props from under a house.

However, he may play around with the irresponsible and pick up their words and their ways that "heavy duty business" you talk about is underneath, saves him. He would run amok if he followed more closely the literary and social and economic whimsies of the day. He enjoys them, indulges in some rather

obvious imitations, but they are not even skin
deep, just a bit of sun burn.

You ask if White is greater than this
or that? I have no talent for or interest in
comparative appraising. He is great as an editor
and journalist I think. His other literary performances
are side lines, finely executed. He is a grand
citizen and friend - inimitable as a humorist - a good
all around practical philosopher - one of the real
possessions of the United States.

Very sincerely yours

Miss Evangeline S. McAllister
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