

*Baltimore Evening Sun*  
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### ***Good Old Baltimore***

The average Spokane man, when he thinks of Spokane, jumps into the air and cracks his heels together. The average Baltimorean, when he thinks of Baltimore, begins to growl.

The cult of the city worship, which has so many votaries in the West, is almost unknown in our fair city. Along the Coast all a man has to do to get a reputation as an intellectual giant is to predict that Seattle will be larger than New York by 1914 and richer than Babylon by 1920. The people out there like that sort of vapid balderdash. They delight in singing the praises of their barbarous towns, in making infantile prognostications of future eminence, in exhibiting their hideous public buildings, cigar-box suburbs, rough-necked celebrities and bare, bald boulevards to strangers. In a word, they incessantly point with pride.

### *Virtuosi of Disgust*

Here in Baltimore, it seems to be a good deal more fashionable to view with alarm. Nearly every Baltimorean able to speak the English language—a dwindling majority—cherishes and voices some bilious objection to the city. One maintains that the cobblestones on West German street are unbearable and inexcusable abominations. Another argues that the local tax rate is the highest in the world. A third pants with rage when he thinks of the city council. A fourth specializes upon unclean alleys. A fifth upon Sonny Mahon, Mr. Van Sickle or King Bill Garland. A sixth denounces Warden Weyler for making the penitentiary pay. A seventh anathematizes the Pratt Library, the new traffic rules, Ed. Parrish, the blue laws, the jimson weeds of East Mount Vernon place, the United Railways pay-as-you-enter cars, the Board of Estimates, the Downs case or the Municipal Art Society. And tacked at the end of the long and variegated indictment is the general charge that Baltimore is a slow old town.

This spirit of criticism, this absence of doggish loyalty is a very valuable thing to Baltimore. It saves us from the childish vainglory of the Western towns. It makes us chronically suspicious of the professional patriots and platitudinarians, prophets and promoters who prosper so amazingly beyond the Mississippi. Best of all it keeps us on our mettle. Knowing that the folk of other towns think us slow and half convinced that they are right, we do our darndest with desperate assiduity. And thereby we make progress without also making a noise.

*The Good Old Cobble!*

But we would all be a bit more comfortable if we were a bit less industrious in seeking faults and a bit less ready to parade them. The fact that we live in Baltimore instead of in Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Denver or New Orleans is sufficient proof that by some unconscious process we have arrived at the theory that Baltimore has advantages, as a place of residence over all those towns. Let us but transform that unconscious process into an orderly marshalling of causes and it will become apparent straightaway not only that Baltimore has charms that are not to be found elsewhere but also that her faults are greatly exaggerated in the telling.

We have the worst streets, say the pessimists in the United States. Is that true? It is not—and it never was. Baltimore was one of the first American cities to pave its roadways. It began to lay honest cobbles far back in the stagecoach days, and if it has hung to them with rather painful fidelity, one may at least argue in its defense that it has not spared them. The streets of Baltimore in a word are actually paved and have been so for years—not only the main business and residence streets, but the lanes, the alleys and the remote highways of the suburbs.

Let us turn now to Chicago, a city in which the cobblestone is unknown. Upon all the 4,200 miles of street, avenue and boulevard within the corporate limits of Chicago not a single cobble is to be seen. Asphalt and wooden blocks here and there. But there are also nearly 3,000 miles of highway in Chicago with no pavement at all—3,000 miles of sand and clay, without even cobblestones to fill the mud holes in wet weather! In Baltimore less than 10 per cent of the street mileage is unpaved. In Chicago nearly 66 percent is unpaved!

### *Granite – Or Mudd?*

Here, indeed, is food for the grumblers! Which do you prefer, Messieurs—the good, hard cobbles, or soft, red mud? Have you ever made progress through the outskirts of Chicago? Do you remember that gluey mud? Do you know those crazy, rickety boardwalks, with their loose planks, their fathomless abysses? Do you know those dark lanes without even crazy boardwalks? And if you do, do you prefer them to streets of honest cobbles with red bricks on the sidewalks and a lamp at every corner?

We are abandoning the cobble. We kiss it goodbye. A city ordinance lays a curse upon it. In the suburbs we are now laying asphalt and downtown we are experimenting. If our streets were as level as those of Chicago we might adopt the wood block, of which Chicago has many a mile, but nature made them hilly instead, and so we still seek and seek.

Some day perhaps an ingenious man will invent a paving block of cast steel, celluloid, corundum, bisque, sawdust or concrete that will have smoothness without slipperiness. When that day dawns the cobblestones will pass into the great limbo of things that were but are not. But let us not forget it. Let us remember to pick out three or four hoary and venerable cobbles, say from the corner of Howard and Camden streets, and deposit them reverently in the city archives, to remain there forever. The cobble has served Baltimore and the Baltimoreans full well. It has kept our feet dry and it has given us something to hate.

But behold! cry the rhapsodists of evil, we have no sewers! Well, we are doing our best to remedy that lack. A few years more and the small boys will no longer sail boats in the gutters! A few years more and the rinsing of cuspidors on hotel sidewalks will cease! A few years more and our sewers will be our pride. Meanwhile, let us remember that it might be worse. In New Orleans they haven't even gutters.

Sewers, in truth, do not make happiness. Neither does asphalt. The people of New York have an almost perfect system of sewers, but they can't live in them. They have also nearly a thousand miles of smooth streets, but they can't eat and sleep on the bitulithic. When a New Yorker goes home he goes to a little doghouse of a flat with squalling babies above him and maddening phonographs below. He pays \$80 a month for five rooms. His hot water is always cold and his cold water is always hot. The paper on the wall recalls a Pittsburgh bar room. Men are blasting across the street. The police are constantly raiding the neighbors. The prospect from the window includes a section of elevated, the kitchen of a \$1 a day hotel, four illuminated signs and the sabbatlycal entrance of a café.

When a Baltimorean goes home, he goes to an actual house. There is room in the back yard to raise a few dahlias, room in the cellar for the children to play, room on the front steps to stretch out on lazy summer evenings. That house is the castle of the man who lives in it. Four times out of ten he owns it; six times out of ten he is sorry he doesn't. In it he is free to do as he pleases. There is no janitor to bother him. He potters in his garden. He varnishes the furniture. He is happy.

### *We're Happy, Anyhow*

Let us confess it to one another. Baltimore is a good old town. The cobblestones are rough—but they might be tin cans. The tax rate may be high—but out of every dollar collected fully 95 cents is spent honestly and fully 40 cents intelligently. In New York the politicians take 50 percent and then half. And the City Council—a thick headed, hunkerous, ignorant lot? Maybe so! Maybe so! But in Pittsburgh the councilmen are thieves.

Of course, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Someday we'll dredge the channel at Howard and Pratt streets and build a bridge over it. Someday we'll abolish the Orphans' Court, find a satisfactory School Board, deodorize the harbor, establish those steamship lines to South America, repeal the blue laws, give the Johns Hopkins a couple of million and let the girls vote. Some day too we'll provide ambulances for the injured, instead of hauling them to hospitals in patrol wagons.

Let the future look to all those things. In the meanwhile, let us be glad that we are Baltimoreans. Just suppose as unkind fate had made us Pittsburghers!

