

*The Times* published an article called "The Eclipse of the Highbrow," in which the "average man" was exalted, and all contemporary literature was censured, with the exception of Lord Elton. Commenting on this article, Sir Kenneth Clark wrote in a memorable letter: "The poet and the artist are important precisely because they are not average men; because in sensibility, intelligence, and power of invention they far exceed the average." These words of Clark's, and particularly the words "power of invention," are the Bohemian's passport. Furnished with it, he slinks outside the fortifications of society, saluted now by a brickbat and now by a coin, and accepting either of them with equanimity. He does not consider too anxiously what his relations with the mess inside may be, or listen too intently to the drone of the remorse-mongers as they remind him that he is partially to blame. He can hear something more important than that—namely, the invitation to create order—and he knows that he will be better placed for doing it if he attempts detachment. So round and round he slouches, with his hat pulled over his eyes and maybe with a louse in his beard.

As our present society disintegrates, this *démodé* figure will become clearer; the Bohemian, the outsider, the parasite, the rat—one of those figures which have at present no function either in a warring

or peaceful world. It is not very dignified to be a rat; but all the ships are sinking, which is not dignified either—the business men did not build them properly. Myself, I would sooner be a swimming rat than a sinking ship—at all events, I can look around me for a little longer—and I remember how one of us, a rat with particularly bright eyes called Shelley, squeaked out, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," before he vanished into the waters of the Mediterranean.

What laws did Shelley propose to pass? None. The legislation of the artist is never formulated at the time, though it is sometimes discerned by future generations. He legislates through creating, and he creates through his sensitiveness and his power to impose form. Without form the sensitiveness perishes. And form is as important to-day, when our tools are blasted and our canvases slashed and our typewriters jammed, as it ever was in those happy days when the earth seemed solid and the stars fixed. Form is not tradition. It alters from generation to generation. Playwrights no longer observe the unities, musicians are no longer interested in composing sonatas. They seek a new technique, and will do so as long as their work excites them. But form of some sort is imperative. It is the surface crust of the internal harmony.

