

THE BIRMINGHAM AGE-HERALD
NOVEMBER 16, 1938
EDITORIAL

Forum Of The People

A CHALLENGE TO ALL

To Editor, The Age-Herald:

I am a gentile American woman who has had the privilege of a very deep Jewish friendship here in Birmingham. It is a friendship that intensifies my emotional understanding of Dorothy Thompson's letter, "To a Jewish Friend," which I have just read in The Age-Herald. There have been times when I have not agreed with Miss Thompson's articles, when I have even felt that she was hysterically incapable of defending her theses. But this morning I am proud that a woman has expressed with such feeling and clarity the issue confronting each one of us as a civilized human being. The horror of what has been happening in Germany over weeks and months has crystallized these last few days into a poisonous compound which will not eternally be confined within itself. As Miss Thompson says, "The crisis is not a Jewish crisis. It is a human crisis." She settled once and for all, lest there should be some lingering doubt, the question of whether an American parent is any more willing for his child to be persecutor than persecuted, whether he is complacent to the danger

that his children may be taught prejudice, violence, brutality in their relationship to other human beings.

There is the challenge to each of us in such a letter as Miss Thompson's, the challenge to redefine our beliefs of good and evil, of American and un-American concepts, of civilized and uncivilized procedure. Having defined them, one must take a stand on the side of the line to which these beliefs lead him. Sometimes the maintenance of a position demands the courage of overriding social convention. An attractive woman who had been my casual friend last Summer at a resort spoke to me of "the danger of intellectual Jews in our country." I was at once under the necessity of declaring my own convictions on the subject, of making clear my integrity as an honest, civilized woman. I'm convinced that in the future in every-day relationships there will be, increasingly, this necessity confronting each of us to make plain his position, to hold up the standards of liberty and tolerance and human affection which must preserve not only the ideals of our democracy, but the fundamental props of civilization. For it is with words, sly, almost unnoticed words at first, by which propaganda grows. It is not a problem that can be left to our political leaders who might easily bring us into this maelstrom of darkness which we wish to avoid. We are individually under the strong compulsion of not only having beliefs, but of hourly defending them, since in the end, we are defending only our own security and happiness.

I have never before written a letter to a newspaper.

MARY FASSETT HUNT.

Birmingham, Nov. 14.