Holm's painting was true to the photograph only as far as his untrained eye would take him. He may have used a system of graphing his blank canvas and the photograph to provide himself with co-ordinates to make the painting more accurate, but it is doubtful. Ultimately his own vision prevailed.

The dark clouds and the funnel in his painting are essentially faithful to the photograph, although Holm has made them more powerful. It is the details of the city that he fails to capture completely. His buildings are copies of those in the photograph in general form, although he has advantageously added color, contrasting the buildings with the dark sky. Except for windows, much of the surface decorations and details are omitted. Background structures are almost entirely obscured in some cases. In his attempt to reproduce an entire scene, Holm focused on certain individual objects, paying an inordinate amount of attention to windows, distorting their size as well as the size of the buildings, which are proportionately larger than they are in the photograph. He enlarged the foreground with the fence and omitted most of the scene to the right of the tree and added a humorous touch just above his signature by painting this tree growing half inside and half outside the fence railings. Unlike many self-taught or primitive painters who are anonymous, Holm signed his name.

Identifiable in both the painting and the photograph are, from left to right, the twin-spired Assumption Church (still standing), the second State Capitol building, West Publishing Company (the large white building, center right), which, with additions, still stands, grain elevator "A" of the St. Paul Warehouse and Elevator Company (now gone), and, behind it, the St. Paul City Hall (now gone). At far right, partially obscured by the tree, is the Pioneer Building.

Recently the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, recognizing that it was an excellent example of a painting by a self-taught artist, purchased the Holm painting. The man who longed to be a successful artist but who could never really escape from the house painting profession has now received lasting recognition as an artist. He will be remembered as the man who painted the Lake Gervais cyclone of 1890.

"The Little Jean Pants"

THE FALL, 1977, issue of Minnesota History *contained a description of the Minnesota Historical Society's latest major exhibit, "The Clothes Off Our Backs: A Minnesota Collection," which was inaugurated in September (and is still open to visitors) in the society's main building at 690 Cedar Street. Star of that exhibit and symbol of its major themes are a pair of worn, faded, and patched little boy's overalls.*

To some people, making something apparently so trivial as these overalls the star of a major clothing exhibit must have seemed unusual. Such people ought to read the following essay uncovered by writer and historian Helen M. White of Taylors Falls, while doing research in Evanston, Illinois. It was written by an individual listed only as "Rev. L. Hawkins" and was published in the November 30, 1864, issue of the Central Christian Advocate, *a Methodist weekly published in St. Louis, Missouri. We believe that it puts little boys' overalls in their proper intellectual perspective and will perhaps persuade those who may think them frivolous to take them a little more seriously.*

HAVING OCCASION not long since to use some refuse clothes in rubbing the stain on a piece of cabinet work, I went to the pile of paper-rags in the store of the village merchant and helped myself. Among those taken were a little pair of cast-off pants. They were considerable of a curiosity. I held them up in my hands and looked at them; and while I did so the words of the poet came forcibly to my mind —

"To what base uses have we come at last!" Let me describe them. They were about eighteen inches in length, all torn, the legs and body about equally divided, say nine inches each. The material of which they were made was blue cotton jean, costing, probably, before the war, from twelve and a half to eighteen and three quarter cents per yard; now, probably from thirty-seven and a half to fifty cents. Of the price of this material, however,

I am not well posted, as my little ones, being of the gentler sex, are habited in calico.

There were evidences about the little pants of a thoughtful and economical mother who made them, and took care of them; and also that the little fellow who lived for a short time inside them was an active, restless little fellow, whose little being was well charged with life and power when it was set in motion.

In the first place, the thoughtfulness of the mother was seen in the fact that the little pants had two pockets in them. Where is the mother who would think of making her little boy a pair of pants without pockets? She might be guilty of such neglect once, but would not be apt to repeat her negligence, for, I fancy, she would have but little rest till the forgotten pockets were inserted. Then I thought of the joy that was experienced when those pants were for the first time put on, and two little hands were thrust inside and found to be in real pockets, with bottoms in them, and no sham or deceit about them. Then I thought of the multitude of articles those little pockets had contained during their brief existence, brief, both as to length of time and length of material. I thought of the apples, and candies, and pea-nuts, and hickory nuts, and pop-corn, and bits of cake, and dried beef, and cold potatoes, and gravel-stones, and pieces of twine, and shoe-strings, and nails, and many others, too numerous to mention. And I wondered if those pockets ever held that pride of a boy's heart — a jack-knife. And was it a real knife, such as would be worth carrying, or was it a "Barlow" — the handle made of iron and the blade of the same material? And then, did the pockets ever contain combs? Probably not, as boys entertain no particular partiality for articles of this character, being associated too closely with a certain painful operation to which they have too often to submit. But whatever those pockets might once have contained, one thing was certain, now they were like Tara's Hall, empty and deserted; not a thing remaining to give the least inkling of their former uses.

I said that the little pants not only gave evidences of a mother's thoughtfulness, but also of a mother's economy; and, I may add, of her skill also. This was to be seen in the patches on the knees. And first it may be remarked that an active little fellow had been inside those pants, as was seen in the fact of both knees being worn through. Had the pants been of longer growth the fact of worn knees might have suggested the idea of liberal devotion on the part of the wearer. But little fellows that wear eighteen-inch pants generally spend but little time in devotional acts of a ritualistic character. Hence, the conclusion is that pure activity was the cause of those holes. But where is the mother who would not rather have an active boy, even if he wore his pants through every week, than a dull, lifeless, stupid fellow, who never stirred?

But how neatly and skillfully those knees had been patched! The same kind of material had been used, the holes cut out to an exact square, and the pieces so exactly adjusted as to show that the workwoman was a mechanic as well as a faithful mother.

But alas! the patches showed the same fate as the original. The little busy knees inside were too much for them, and would not be there confined, and out they came again; for there were the holes right through the patches. By this time other parts of the original showing signs of failure the mother undoubtedly concluded it was useless to contend longer for repairs, and carefully removing all the buttons, as they would do for another pair, had them washed and placed in the rag-bag, hanging in the closet up stairs, from whence they were taken to the village merchant, aforesaid, and disposed of at the rate of three cents per pound, which went, probably, as part payment for material for a new pair.

So much for the little pants. Now more particularly concerning the little boy who wore them. Who was he, what was his name, and where is he now? All this, of course, is mere conjecture. He might have been the son of a farmer, or a mechanic, or a railroad man, or a doctor. He might have been the son of a Methodist preacher, in fact the close economy would suggest that relation. But what was his name? If, as was hinted above, his parents were Methodists, it is not improbable that his name is John Wesley, Francis Asbury, or Matthew Simpson. If, on the contrary, his parents were of Calvinistic faith, his name is probably John Calvin, or Henry Martin, or David Brainard. If, in politics, his parents were of the democratic faith, it may be Thomas Jefferson or Andrew Jackson. If of whig proclivities, it may be Daniel Webster or Henry Clay. But it makes little difference as to the name, as the name does not make the character.

But where now is the little fellow who used to occupy the little pants? Does he still wear pants here below, or has he exchanged the garments of this world for a bright crown and white robe on high? It may be he has made this exchange, but probably he still lives down here. He may be one of the small juniors yet; and his graduation from the little pants into those of a size larger may have been of recent date, and while I write he may be teasing the old dog, or worrying the cat, or doing other mischief in some quiet, prairie home. Or if his graduation was of an earlier date, he may be today in some quiet country school-house, acquiring that education that shall make him conspicuous in after years. Or if the graduation was of still earlier date, he may now be a soldier in the army of his country, and the wearer of "federal blue;" or he may be turning over the soil on some rich prairie, or preaching the gospel in some one of the Lord's houses, with which these boundless prairies are so beautifully dotted, or studying the principles of "Blackstone."

But wherever the hero of my story is, let us hope that

the world will hear from him, and in a way that she will be proud of him. Let us hope that his heart is already given to Jesus, and that his life is and ever shall be consecrated to his service. It matters, then, but little whether he has given his life to the service of his country, or whether he remains at home cultivating the soil, or whether he is proclaiming the gospel from the sacred desk; in either case he will make his influence felt, and will live to a high and holy purpose. And may God help him so to live that when he is done wearing pants, whether he falls pierced by an enemy's shot, or by a more quiet death, he may dwell with the redeemed on high; and may I and all who read these lines be gathered there too, and enjoy each other's society with the society of Jesus and the redeemed forever and ever.

The Editor's Page

HISTORY AS CONFRONTATION

Philip D. Jordan

ARE CONFLICT, disagreement, and confrontation man's heritage?

Is the human family mutilated by the baseness of its nature?

How much truth lies in the belief that all history is rooted in disputation of varying degree, ranging, for example, from neighbors quarreling over a fence to nations warring over boundary lines?

To many, controversy and confrontation symbolize men's many-faceted attempts to wrestle themselves from savagery to civilization, although civilization is a string across a chasm and man is of porcelain clay. Controversy — political, economic, social, religious — is ever present in the historical narrative, and little is to be gained debating whether man was born with the urge to quarrel or whether he conceived it.

The fact may be that the age-old protagonists are man *vs.* himself, man *vs.* other men, and man *vs.* the social order. Frequently, when at odds with himself, man is both plaintiff and defendant. Men and nations, if it be to their advantage, will easily and cheerfully reverse themselves to battle against policies and allies they previously supported.

Inconsistency, controversy, and confrontation, says the historical realist, are primary among the coarse, raw threads from which the always incomplete, unfinished, and unrefined patterns of history are woven. There is more of the red of blood than the white of peace. Themes in the tapestry of mankind, from primitive to the contemporary, are fakes and forgeries reflecting inaccurately and dishonestly man's struggle against himself and the world. There are times when the mask of the realist is replaced by the disguise of the pessimist, so that one appears to be the other. The dreadful grimace conceals the sardonic grin, if, indeed, there is a smile hidden behind the veil.

Clio, handmaiden of history, never has been sufficiently astute to distinguish between the realistic and the romantic. She only knows she is no muse of contentment or harmony and that she carries no olive branch, but holds aloft the lightning bolts of destruction — contention, quarrelsomeness, famine, insensitivity to human rights, war, and ruination. More men of blood muster under her banner than do saints of peace. Even angels, like St. Michael, wear swords.

Like voting dry and drinking wet, national leaders the world over cry and petition for peace while putting dirks and daggers to the grindstone to be used, as they have told peasants for untold generations, only in self-defense. There appear to be, at least in the minds of some, virtues both in adversity and in adversaries. The challenge of both political and economic environments, it is argued, gives strength to the flaccid muscles of both individuals and nations. Man, in short, matures and even "progresses" as the result of competition on all levels. Power grows and buds and blossoms only as the result of controversy and conflict. Christopher Marlowe, the English poet, capsulated that view:

> "The God of war resignes his roume to me,
> Meaning to make me Generall of the world;
> Jove, viewing me in armes, looks pale and wan,
> Fearing my power should pull him from his throne."

Philip D. Jordan is a retired history professor from the University of Minnesota, who now lives in Burlington, Iowa. He has written articles, reviews, and books on a wide variety of historical subjects. He wrote the editorial, "The Neurosis of Nostalgia," published in the Winter, 1974, issue of Minnesota History, *which provoked interest and some differing viewpoints, which we also published. The editors would be interested in comments on this editorial.*