

IN FAVOR OF THE YOUNG FOLKS

FIRE'S OUT, or at least under control. Loss fully covered by insurance. Not such a frightful loss, either. Conflagration really a blessing in disguise, as the new structure to be erected on the site will surpass in grandeur and practicality the one destroyed.

Figuratively—of course, figuratively—such is the conclusion reached by multitudes of observers regarding the wild doings of contemporary young folks. The preponderant testimony from college presidents, college deans, high-school principals, school superintendents, editors of religious newspapers, and editors of college weeklies and monthlies goes to show that the worst is past or even that what we have called the worst was instead a manifestation of tendencies actually beneficial. All in all, the opinions set forth by these optimistic on-lookers constitute a vigorous reply to the letters reviewed in last week's *Digest*, and it is significant that they come from the same classes of observers as the others and from the same localities—that is to say, from educational centers in virtually all districts of America.

For the sake of clearness, we print again the circular letter which *The Digest* sent out and to which our correspondents reply. It was worded thus:

A year ago *The Digest* gathered opinions from all over the country on dress, dancing, and general moral standards, especially as these matters affected young people. The material was presented under the heading "Is the Younger Generation in Peril?" and aroused considerable comment from all quarters. There does not seem, at the present time, to be nearly so much discussion of this subject as there was a year ago, but of that little a large part is unfavorable.

Will you be kind enough to tell us whether, in your opinion, there has been a change, and, if so, in what the change consists? Are conditions worse or better? What are the causes? If remedies are in order, what remedies would you suggest? Your opinion, given to all America through our 1,500,000 copies, with millions of readers, may be of great value to parents, educators, young people, and others directly interested in the rising generation. Perhaps the crux of the question may be stated in this way:

Is society, especially the younger part of it, undergoing a revolution in morals, in manners, or in both?

In replying to this letter, several correspondents assert that much of the alarm over our young people's behavior was a result of sensational and wholly groundless reports in the newspapers. "It is a well-known fact that the metropolitan newspapers find no college news so tempting as the scandal news which comes from college and university communities," says Brewster P. Campbell, editor of the *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor). "Some universities, it will be noticed, receive much more such unfavorable publicity than do others. Investigation will usually prove that these institutions are located near, or in, large cities, where papers with a yellow tendency, are published. The university is a place where scandal can easily be started, and the papers play on this—manufacturing much news with but little basis."

Frank L. Freer, general secretary of the Ohio Christian Endeavor Union, believes that, "It is the unusual that attracts attention and we soon become accustomed to anything. This is especially true of young people and in no way can I bring myself to believe that the average young person has any moral disturbance because of current style." J. R. Kelton, principal of the Amsterdam (N. Y.) High School, expresses his agreement in the lively assurance that, "The powdered beak or the dimpled knee won't send any more to the bow-wows than did the styles when we saw less and thought more."

And President Judson of the University of Chicago reaches the conclusion that there is not, at least, any "serious danger." He comments:

"There is always more or less discussion as to the younger generation. As far as my experience goes, and it covers now not a few years, the younger generation is always changing. It is changing now. Some of these changes I should rather not have. Others I am very glad to see. I do not believe, on the whole, that the conditions are materially worse than they have been for a long time. No doubt the war unsettled society at large. In this unsettlement perhaps our younger people share to some extent. But mind you, it is only a sharing of what goes with the entire community. In short, to answer your questions specifically, I do not believe that society, especially the younger part of it, is undergoing a radical revolution either in morals or manners. It is passing through a condition of change certainly in manners, perhaps to some extent in morals, but I do not believe that there is any serious danger. We need to do what we have always needed to do—to use the best efforts for wise direction and proper education. May I add that these efforts belong to the home and the church even more than to the schools?"

President Smith of Roanoke College (Salem, Va.) finds "young people to-day just as genuine and wholesome as they have ever been. They have more candor than formerly, more self-assertion, and greater intensity of life." Edith M. Tuttle, adviser to students in the Department of Education, at the Washington Irving High School (New York City), reports:

"Our experience with our 5,000 girls in this school leads us to believe that there is, at present as much idealism as ever among young people. Our girls show a willingness to learn and to practise the best in morals and in manners." "Fundamentally," agrees John C. Burtner, who edits the *Oregon Countryman* at the Oregon Agricultural College, "morals are no worse than before. They appear worse because the changing manners have allowed the worst elements to become conspicuous. Observation of a student body of 3,500 men and women emphasizes the absence of any major moral laxity in spite of the changing surface appearances." Edgar L. Killam, editor of the *Baptist*, looking backward, writes:

"My personal opinion, based upon a fairly wide observation, leads me to believe that a great deal of the talk about flappers, galeshes and wild oats which has had the public attention since

"In many places we hear charges of indiscriminate and even organized immorality on the part of young people of high-school age," agrees President Futrell of the University of Arkansas. "If the persons making the charges are called on for evidence they are rarely able to produce any. There seems to be a type of mind which is always glad to believe that the world is going to the dogs with the young people leading the way."

Meanwhile, we are warned by numerous observers not to be too seriously distressed over developments whose reality no one questions. On the surface there are changes. How deep do they go? R. L. Nye, dean of the College of Agriculture at Syracuse University, replies in this optimistic way:

"The manner of dress on the part of girls, a general 'boldness' in their attitude toward the other sex, apparently less of the restraint of social convention, has led many of us older people to judge that there is a corresponding laxity of morals. I do not believe this to be the case."

"My conclusion," says H. Truman Bates, superintendent of schools at Somerset, Mass., "is that despite the fact that sex is unduly emphasized by fashions and the dance hall, we hear and know of no more immorality than at previous periods in the history of society." A student editor, Andrew Hamilton, of the *Ellsworth Student* (Iowa Falls, Ia.), believes, similarly, that:

"The younger generation is perhaps quite as free from evils as were previous generations. The greatest trouble seems to be a desire to appear 'fast' because 'everybody else does it.' The sophisticated young man-of-the-world and his little 'flapper' are not devoid of goodness, as some righteous souls would have us believe; they do not themselves understand their actions; they are just 'jazzy' because it is the style in the city."

"The current idea that every girl having bobbed hair, a short skirt and silk hose is of the flapper type is erroneous. It is simply keeping up with the Joneses," thinks B. F. Weiss, principal of the Kent (O.) High School. President Atkinson of the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute sends us a cutting in which the Brooklyn *Eagle* quotes him to this complimentary effect:

"On the whole, I approve of the modern style of dress and do not believe for a moment that it is as a general thing worn for any immodest motive. Generally speaking, I should say that it has not had a deleterious effect on the morals."

"The use of rouge, the lipstick and the eyebrow pencil is pretty general, I suspect. It is silly and objectionable, but not immoral. Whether cigarette-smoking is as general among young girls, I do not know. I hope not; but even this practise is not immoral. Caring it so will get us nowhere."

"I do not know whether men refuse to dance with girls who do not 'pet,' smoke and drink."

"Much of the criticism is due to the natural antagonism that has always existed and will always exist between the old and the young. As one of the 'old ones' I am quite ready to admit that the youth of to-day, while strangely different, is more moral than the youth of my day."

Equally complimentary to the young idea is C. R. Smith, editor of the *Kansas State Collegian*, who observes:

"Young people are doing openly to-day a great many things which they formerly did secretly," says W. F. O'Donnell, superintendent of the Carrollton (Ky.) public schools, "and this fact leads some to believe that there has been a lowering of moral standards." A similar differentiation between manners and morals is made by Dean Eldridge of the University of Idaho, who writes:

"Briefly, I believe there is a decided revolution in manners but I can not bring myself to believe that our young people are essentially different in morals. One hears now on the campus 'Hello!' even to the professors, in place of the 'How do you do?' of two years ago, but I see in this not a trace of disrespect, but rather a quite wholesome acceptance of the faculty as fellow humans!"

"Fundamentally, I believe, there has been no change. Only the appearances have changed, the real things will last," says F. King Turgeon, editor of the *Bowdoin Orient*. Charles F. Thwing, LL.D., president emeritus of Western Reserve University, sharpens his general approval with a bit of criticism. He writes:

"The morals of young people are not bad—in fact, they are becoming better. The year has brought improvement. The instincts of young, as of older, people continue to be sound. But the manners are cheap. Our manners lack dignity, poise, self-respect, a respect for life's sanctities. Irreverence characterizes both manners and manner."

"As far as I can see," remarks President Ray Lyman Wilbur of Stanford University, in a cheerful vein, "the young people are going downward at about the same rate that they were when I was in high school and in college some twenty-five or thirty years ago. The newspaper editorials and comments from the older generation that I heard then from above are very much like those that I hear all around me at the present time. I find the young men and women with whom I come in contact fundamentally sound and wholesome." Ann Hastings, editor of the *Radcliffe News*, is equally optimistic. "I do not think," she writes, "the 'morals of the young' are inferior to those of previous generations. The 'young' always will shock the old, and the old always will talk about it." Nor are "the old," it appears, in a position to be censorious without incurring a degree of ridicule. Speaking for several fellow editors, Ward W. Adair, editor of *Railroad Men*, takes the elder generation to task in fashion:

"I am personally less concerned with the morals and manners of the rising generation than I am with those of people in middle life, particularly women. To see some of these old crowds blowing smoke rings in a restaurant, or sitting around station waiting-rooms in knickerbockers, and with their feet half under their heads, is what gives a man loathing and disgust. And these outrages are perpetrated more particularly by dames who have passed the half-century mark, and are trying to kid themselves that they are still on the map, than by any of the rising generation. Nothing is more tragic than to see one of these ancient

birds trying to fool the disgusted spectators in regard to her age. She only succeeds in fooling herself."

"I have great faith in these future citizens of our great country, and should not be surprised any time to see a movement among them for the reform of the morals and manners of the middle-aged citizens of to-day," says Dean Hill of Georgetown College (Georgetown, Ky.).

The age of the critic has much to do with the flavor of the criticism, believes McLane Tilton, editor of the *University of Virginia Alumni News*. He observes:

"So far as mere dress goes, all depends upon the age of the woman one happens to be talking with. Between twenty and thirty she defends the flapper; from thirty to forty, the honors are easy; from forty and upwards, the flapper has no friends among her sex. And that is that."

"Girls are no better or no worse than they ever were. There are just as many good girls, there are no more fast or bad girls, but all three of these types now mingle together in a way impossible thirty years ago. I well recall the horror created at that distant time when the chaperons of the

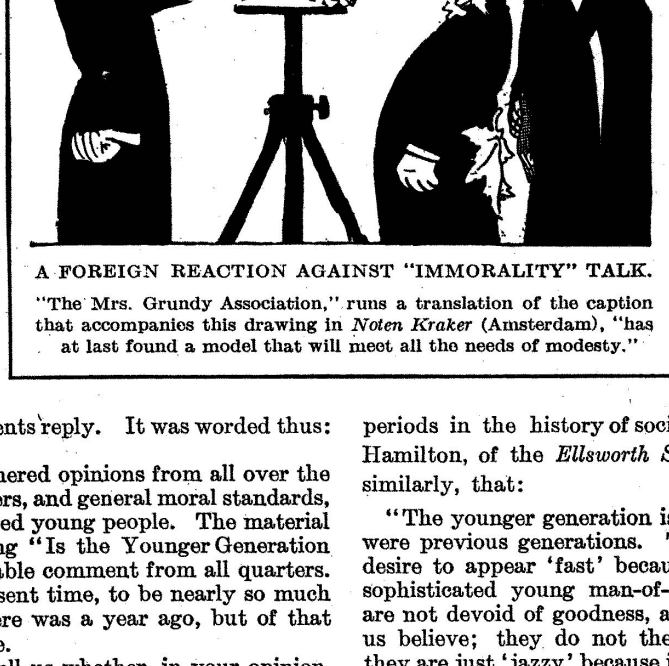
Monday German in a Virginia city saw a girl from another set on the floor, and when they became convinced a girl from their own set was using rouge. Both were promptly asked to leave, one permanently, the other to wash her face. This was business for the old folk, and they gave it strict attention. Most of the old folk to-day are themselves having too much fun to pass judgment in such cases."

Philip W. Porter, editor of the *Lantern*, a student publication at the University of Ohio, observes "the older generation can not take the slipper in hand until it cleans off the mud that is on it." Another defender of the youth of the nation goes further along the same line. The elder generation, she holds, is actually responsible for leading the youngsters into temptation. As this critic, Thysa W. Amos, Dean of Women at the University of Pittsburgh, views the matter:

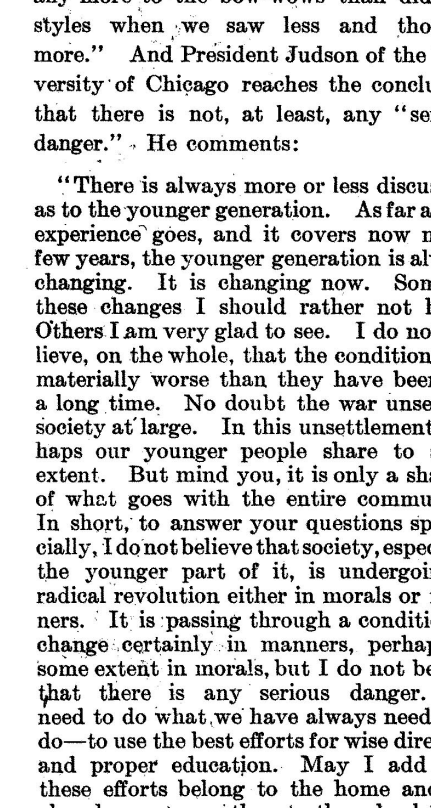
"At present, the social curriculum is being attacked because of social standards. The attack is unwarranted. The student does not set social standards. He inherits these just as he falls heir to the studies of the academic curriculum. No student invented jazz; no student wrote the sex play; no student wrote the present vulgar obscene songs; no student photographed the immoral film; and no student created coarse fashions in dress for men and women. All these are the gracious gifts of a commercialized society."

"If society in general had as high ideals as the average high school or college student, there would be a different world to-morrow. For the most part, his worst fault is that his taste is bad. Student government associations, fraternity and social groups are struggling to maintain high ideals of social life, but society at large makes their task doubly hard. In the past, youth has been trained to reverence and follow the judgments of maturity. To-day, when he follows the leadership of his elders, they condemn him."

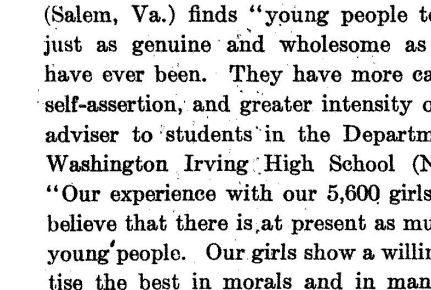
President Kolbe of the Municipal University (Akron, O.) believes that our young people are "fairly capable of working out their own salvation as ably as their fathers and their mothers



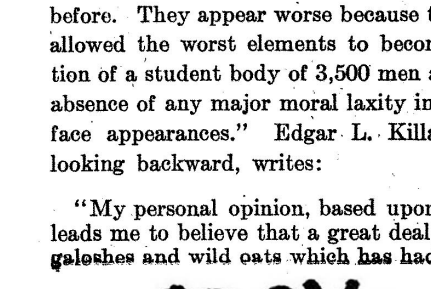
A FOREIGN REACTION AGAINST "IMMORALITY" TALK. "The Mrs. Grundy Association," runs a translation of the caption that accompanies this drawing in *Noten Kraker* (Amsterdam), "has at last found a model that will meet all the needs of modesty."



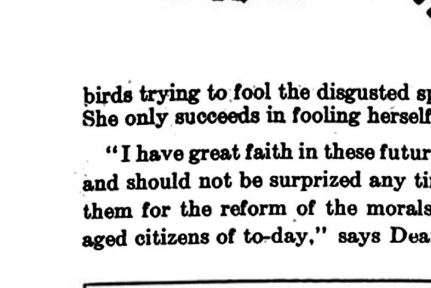
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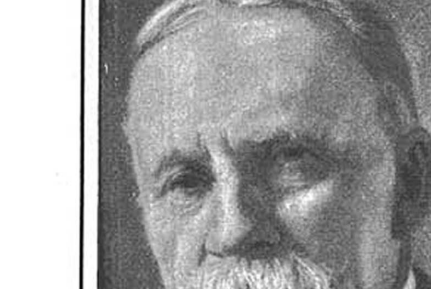
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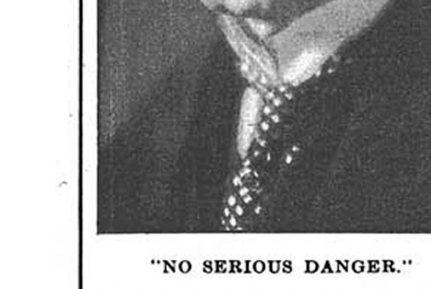
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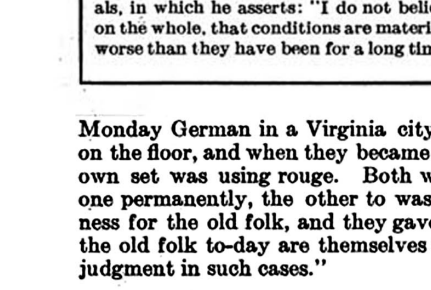
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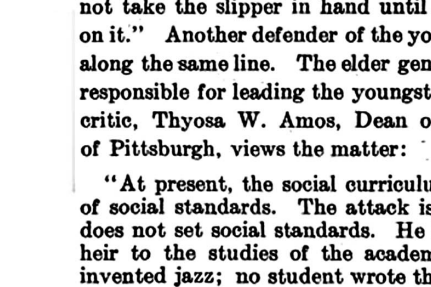
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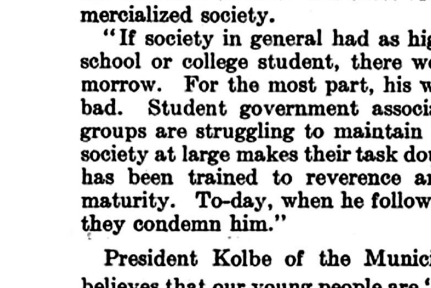
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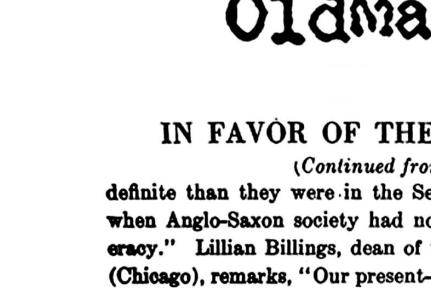
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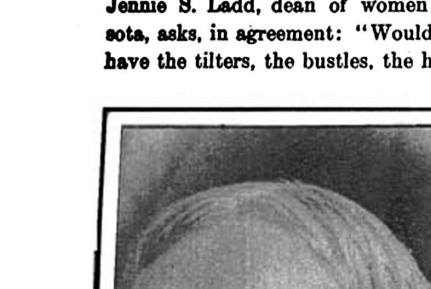
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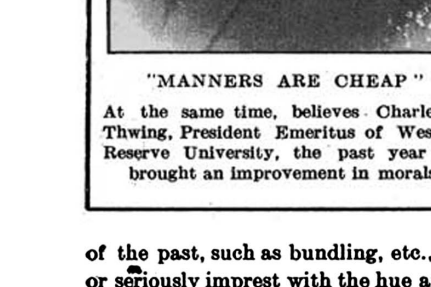
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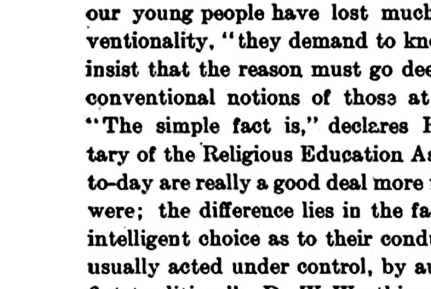
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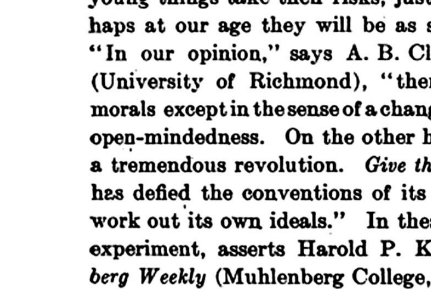
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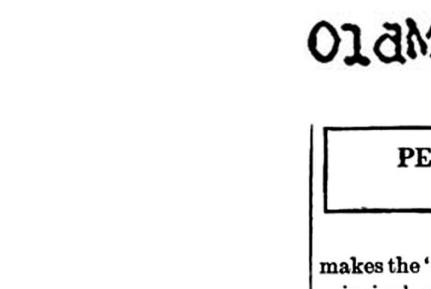
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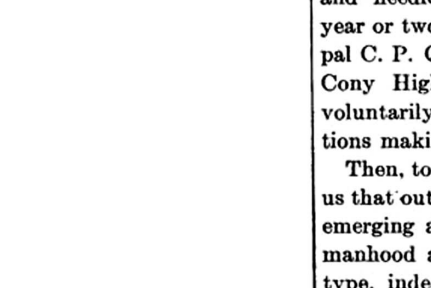
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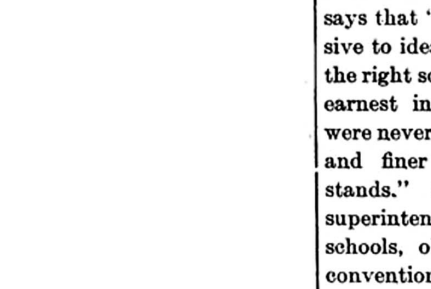
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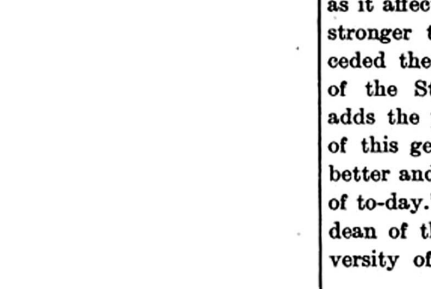
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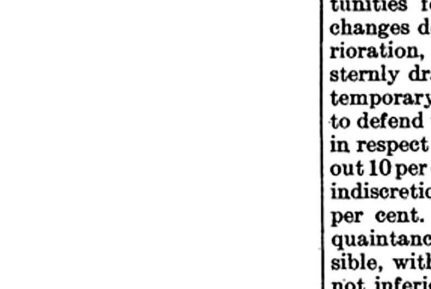
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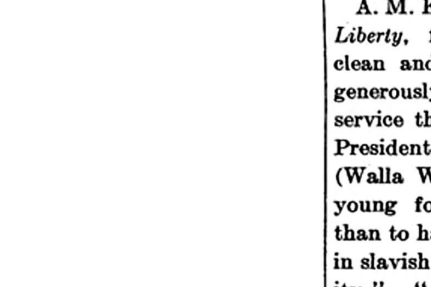
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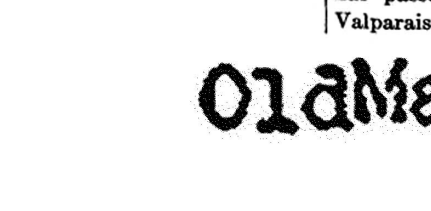
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