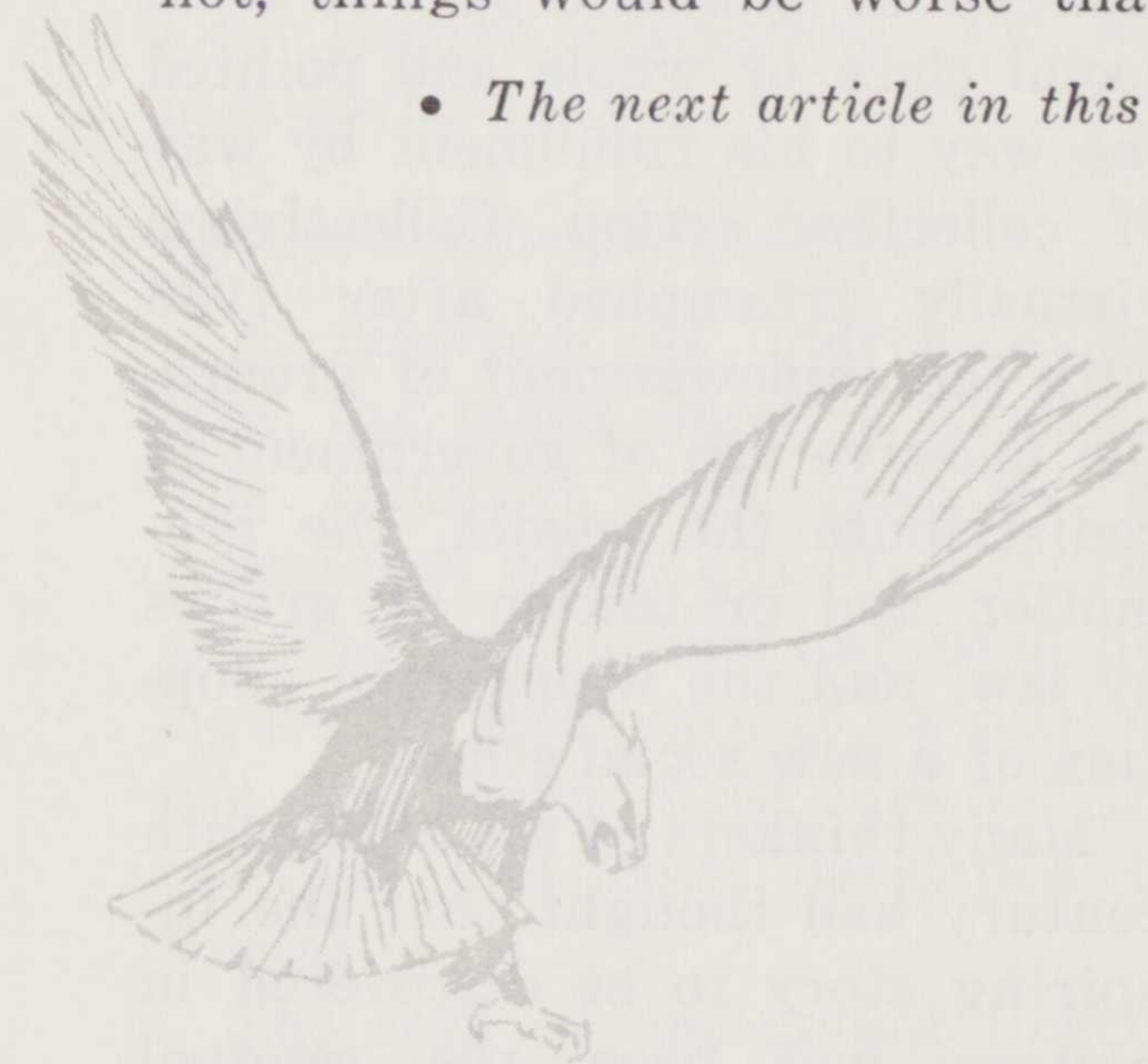


morality, when individuals would be gladly yielding up the hard won liberty that their forefathers had vouchsafed to them in order to receive the comforts of submergence in the mass.

Yet we know that individual morality still lives in the thoughts and actions of most, that if it did not, things would be worse than

they are. We know that there are many who would repudiate the trend of this century toward collectivism if they could perceive it clearly. We believe that if the protective cover of rhetoric under which collectivism has been advanced could be removed, men would act gladly to restore a vital tradition. ♦

• The next article in this series will treat "Of Equality"



"Big Red" Makes a Choice

WILLIAM E. HOWELL

A HAWK, a snow-covered field, a zoo, and a bobtailed mouse were subject parts of a recent lesson in self-determination and the right to choose. These principles of liberty, bequeathed to us by those who regarded them highly, apparently have come to be lightly esteemed in a welfare state.

As I stood looking across our icy, snow-covered countryside, the thermometer outside the window read zero.

Mr. Howell works for a chemical company in Kansas.

The real object of my scanning was not yet in view, though ordinarily one could almost check the time by his appearance. I was reaching the point of concern when I sighted him well off his usual path, low over the treetops, and coming in fast. Big Red was late.

Big Red is an Eastern red-tailed hawk, a giant in his family, a magnificent specimen, not a feather missing; and he shines with the metallic sheen of cleanliness. For four years he has

patrolled our rural area, teaching us the worth of hawks in general and something about independence and self-reliance in particular—he has but one leg.

As he leveled off over the field he had chosen as a hunting ground, he set immediately and intensely about his job. The big fellow obviously was hungry; and his aerial maneuvers were something to watch as he sailed low and slowly over the icy table Nature had set below him.

He balanced himself in the icy air with the ease and grace of a tightwire walker, investigating every clump of poverty grass and giving special attention to tree- and bush-lined fence rows.

He worked steadily without results as he measured off the area of the field before moving to the row of trees within fifty feet of my ringside window. As he pulled even with me, he wheeled suddenly away as if startled. Flapping his wings to gain altitude, he made a lightning about-face and dived like a bullet at the base of a huge wild cherry tree that supported a bird feeding station. Amid a flurry of snow and feathers, he came up with a fat, short-tailed mouse as large as a small rat, probably his first food of the day.

As he made off with his catch, my thoughts turned to another

specimen of red-tailed hawk living under different conditions: *Buteo borealis borealis*, the caption under his cage says; he is in the birdhouse at our zoo. In his dirty, broken feathers he sits motionless, apparently oblivious to his surroundings, caring so little about living as to seldom open his eyes; and when he does, his vacant stare wanders without focus and without hope or purpose to give it expression. Gone is the fierce countenance of birds of prey, the characteristic that makes them fascinating.

My eye followed Big Red as he made for some dining point he had in mind, and the thought occurred: if he had a choice, would this wild thing exchange his meager morsel so wearily gleaned on his frigid patrol for the full belly of his broken counterpart resting securely behind bars never to know the glory of sailing slowly over a snow-covered field with the temperature at zero?

One is free to suffer, free to loaf, free to choose—just free; the other is not. True, the captive did not choose his status of security. But whether a creature (human or other) voluntarily seeks such security, or is forced to accept it, the deadening consequences seem inevitable. ♦