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Character?"

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Why We Write Like Human Beings

E. Haldeman-Julius

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Literature is the recreation of life—or its creation, one may almost say, in the form of a deliberate artistic spectacle or problem coherently set forth—in terms of the writer's viewpoint. We know that life is not as clearly arranged, that its various elements are not as conveniently, purposefully set forth, as we are given to observe it in literature. Life is more accidental, more confused, and yet more simple in a way than literature; or perhaps I should say that life is more superficially, hastily observed by the average person. Things are mixed with no clear understanding of their significance, relevant or diverse. Events and problems are simplified by snap judgments, easy formulas, all the demands of conventional human relationships.

It is the nature of literature that it should be speculative and curious. It takes account of things which are not usually observed with insight. It ignores other things which have no bearing upon the situation or problem with which a particular work of literature concerns itself. In short, literature seeks patterns in life, brings order out of chaos, heightens and interprets and presents in a foreground of clarified, controlled action the circumstances that press so confusingly upon us in the hurry of existence. Through literature we are aided to a more reflective kind of life, to a wider and keener sensitiveness than in our limited experience each of us singly could have, to a more consistent study of developments and relations which would otherwise escape us. Literature concentrates and vivifies.

To be sure, literature as a whole matches the variety and even the confusion of life as a whole. Nothing in the long run escapes the universal demand of man for self-expression. All things find their place in the lively, incessantly curious range of the literary as of other arts. Every phase of life will be given different interpretations, some complementary and some contradictory, depending upon the viewpoints of many writers. Periods have their characteristic literature. The conditions of social life find their reflection in poetry and fiction and art, as well as in writing that more obviously deals with the conflict of

ideas or the direct representation of the timely scene. Whether literature has for its object an actual record or an imaginative view, it is not independent of the environmental material out of which the artist must forge his finished work.

True, there are great fundamental themes which run more or less familiarly through all literature. Human nature offers what must seem at first glance a bewildering variety to the writer, and of course the writer may deliberately impose a false, unnatural set of values or relations upon life; yet there is an approximation to reality, a groundwork of concern with familiar impulses and problems, which one looks for in any period. There are differences in emphasis, in the quality of reaction to the same things, in the evaluation of social and artistic ideals. There is too a close resemblance among all primitive literature and a certain refinement and catholicity which one expects in all civilized literature, in spite of differences of time and place and race: for as any society develops it grows more intellectual, more curious and critical, more skillful if not more grand and impressive in its artistic technique. Finally, there are artists who have applied themselves more profoundly to a permanent expression of certain endless familiar and sound ideas, emotions, or conflicts; so that we may not regard any great artist as out of date even though we can perceive where he has been in some ways influenced by his age.

But although the human nature of literature is unescapable, and although there are main themes and tendencies that are traceable in the writings of men widely separated by time, and place, it is none the less interesting to take note of the development of ideas in literature. One can see in a special historical light a style or tendency or viewpoint that may be considered as characteristic of a period. One can identify literature with its background, with its hour and scene, in the ever-familiar yet ever-changing human drama.

The world is the only stage that man has known, and upon this stage certain relationships among the actors and certain "laws" of action are as old as historic man. But the stage settings have been changed from time to time. The relationships among the actors have been varied in their social if not so much in their natural terms. Even the "laws" of action have been changed, or rather, we have learned more about them, so that we have a broader and surer scope of action. And while all the men and women are players, and while they appear

in roles that essentially are old indeed, there are differences imposed by their time upon their playing of these roles.

It is such differences, as exhibited in four important periods of English literature, which form the subject of this essay: the period of Shakespeare and Marlowe, the period of Pope and Swift, the period of Dickens and Thackeray, and the period in which we now live. Of course, I do not pretend to treat exhaustively of these great literary periods. Nor do I wish to fall into the error of over-simplifying these periods and claiming that a certain tone or element of literary significance—a certain order of ideas—may be named as a complete explanation of any large body of human thought or art. No doubt it would be easy to point out exceptions to any such arbitrary and narrowed interpretation. Naturally, we should expect any literary period to offer a variety of expression, a variety which is greater when the urge of a free-ranging curiosity is more potent.

One bears in mind also that no two writers are quite alike. Even when their aims correspond, there are bound to be individual differences of expression. We may say that two Victorian writers, for example, were animated by the moral, sentimental viewpoint which so conspicuously was the spirit of that period. So indeed they may have been similarly marked by their time. They can be studied together in this way, provided that their peculiarities are not lost sight of. Yet in other respects they are interestingly contrasted. Their definite ideas may not be the same. Their emotional attitudes may not agree. They may be attracted by widely different and far-removed interests in life. It is one thing to associate the writers of a period, another thing to confuse them. Strong as is the period-resemblance between Dickens and Thackeray—both unmistakably Victorian, both novelists with exceeding moral purpose—yet one cannot place the two men in precisely the same category. They have not the same literary style, nor the same type of mind, nor the same individual background and direction of interests. Even so, it is useful to know in what way they do agree in representing faithfully certain literary qualities that were distinctly on exhibit in their period.

And so, in my present survey—really no more pretentious than a glimpse—of the periods mentioned, I have in mind certain remarkable characteristics, certain broadly defined tendencies, in the light of which they can most profitably be studied. There were other moods, other convictions, than those which

now engage my attention. Yet the most impressive thing about Elizabethan literature is its robustness, its adventurousness, its imaginativeness, its freshness of youth and abandon. In the so-called Augustan period we can observe a more classic temper, less exuberant and becoming more critical, with such contrasts, however, as the mild Addison and the fierce Dean Swift. Victorianism was soberly freighted with moral purpose and a conventionalism that was a far cry from Shakespeare and Fielding, even Thackeray lamenting that "the whole history of a man" could not any more be written so frankly as in *Tom Jones*. Today we have a freer period than has been known in English literature since the time of Fielding, while we have a sophistication not less than the elegant yet forcible Augustans, and our scientific outlook upon the "moral" aspects of behavior is more sound and admirable than the brand of pious sentimentality and tearfulness and reverence that was current in the Victorian period.

And it is important to remember that in each period the literature, marked by such major characteristics, is a true and an intimately identifying reflection of the general spirit of the time. There were exceptions, but they did not affect the powerful main currents, just as today for example the vestiges of piety and pseudo-romance are certainly not characteristic of the modern realistic temper in literature. It is with an eye to the greatest significance of these periods, their most eminent and memorable tone, that I shall pass them swiftly but not, I hope, carelessly in review.

II

In the time of Shakespeare there flourished the literature of the youth of England. It was England's late but fresh and vigorous reaction to the Renaissance. It was not, in the same way that it was in Italy, a season of the truthful rediscovery of the beauties and delights of an earlier civilization, of a more natural and ardent age. Civilization had flourished remarkably in Italy during Pagan times. There were sunny memories of culture that had been lost in the medieval night. Life had once been freer and happier.

In England, however, there was only a barbaric past. It was at the time of Shakespeare discovering (not rediscovering) in a youthful but intellectually alive way the wonders and possibilities of life. It was finding new and remarkable powers of expression. Themes, old now to us, were new and were handled freshly and naturally. It has been said that the literature of this

awakening period was youthful. It was also robust. It also had a singing, daring, adventurous quality. There were exaggerations of style and sentiment; it was not a controlled, judiciously trained and disciplined literature such as distinguished the Augustan period of Pope and Addison and Swift.

This does not mean that Shakespeare and Marlowe and Ben Jonson and others were merely novices and that they did not know what they were about. They were simply too abundantly, even recklessly expressive, and confident in their generous powers. They could not be bound by rules of literature in the more classic sense. They had no notion of the restraints and manners of elegance or of a smooth, nicely stylized expression.

It would be ridiculously inadequate to call Shakespeare a smooth, polished writer. He was magnificent, sublime, prodigal of language and images; those wonderful phrases, those overpowering pictures of nature and man, came from his fertile, headlong imagination in a perfect torrent. There is more of rushing life in Shakespeare (the same applying less greatly to his contemporaries) and less of careful, slow-going art; which is not to suggest that Shakespeare was not artistic; he was richly, spontaneously the artist—or the genius capable of fine excesses as well as the most ideal effects—whereas, in a later stage of development, talents are on the whole better trained and more deliberately artistic and again are called on to treat of themes that have already been handled by masters.

There is no denying that primitive literature, once it has really found itself, has a certain quality of freshness and vigor which civilized literature has not; but civilized literature has a greater variety, a more developed symmetry and technique, a trained use of words and images and situations which, if it comes in time almost to exhaust originality, is nevertheless admirably effective. Civilization also builds a kind of life with which literature can originally deal.

At the threshold of a new world, and animated by the vigor and wonder of a healthy primitiveness, literature in Shakespeare's time has noticeably the air of astonishing and rapt discovery. It was a time, too, when men's minds were fired by the actual discovery of the New World and when a strong tide of physical expansion, matching the expansive imagination, was setting in. True it is that Shakespeare would appear as a wonder of genius in any age and he is still venerated as an imaginative and poetic master. Yet one can say that in this man was

concentrated the literary and living youth of his England; and undeniably he achieved a grand reflection of the spirit of his period.

Such speculations are not very useful nor are they certain, but it is probably true that Shakespeare would have exhibited a very different style and attitude toward life had he lived, say, in the Augustan period. Certainly he could not have had such a favorable reception of his free, sensuous, bold treatment of life had he been writing in the Victorian period. We know that Shakespeare's audience was not so meticulous about what we now call vulgarity and references of a strikingly candid nature to sex—which has been the especial taboo of the later English—were accepted with interest and enjoyment. Here was indeed nature as they recognized it, as they faced it directly, and the refinements of a more moralistic society did not bear uneasily upon their conscience. Undoubtedly there were moralists then and there was a kind of pretty, poetic literature that was quaint and sweet. Yet the prevailing tone of Elizabethan literature, as it has most impressively come down to us, was one of sensuous freedom and a "vulgar" originality and naturalness in the best sense.

It was a violent, undisciplined period and it seems natural enough that bloody and tragic themes are prominently exhibited in its literature. Tragedy was imaginatively treated at its greatest in Shakespeare's major dramas, yet it was also a suitable and timely reflection of the period; most of his tragic scenes would be impossible of actual realization in our time: men lived then more violently and closer to the strong, uncontrolled, primitive impulses. Youth's imagination—and in the same way the imagination of a period of literary youth—naturally is seduced by images of tragedy. Youthful expression of emotion is strong.

The strong, sheer, sensuous expressiveness of Shakespeare, while inimitably the sign of an extraordinary personal genius, was nevertheless in the tone of literary youthfulness. One never ceases to be impressed—even startled—by the urgent, extremely visualized style in which Shakespeare treats of love and jealousy and death. He presents images that are almost intolerably, overpoweringly eloquent in their extreme imaginative life, that make so real as to be overwhelmingly the wonder and the struggle and the disillusionment of life. Death, "to lie in cold obstruction and to rot"; jealousy, the false mistress who keeps a "cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in"; love, of which there is given a vivid sensuous

picture, almost the actual visualization in imagery of the sheer delights and embraces and also the tormenting temptings: in such themes, one would almost say, Shakespeare is carried out of himself, he is beside himself with the prodigal force of his imagination.

Such an explanation does not of course deny the literary value of this strong, well-nigh intolerable, certainly not sober expressiveness. It was a rich and indeed invaluable contribution to literature and the quivering, seeking, wondering intensity of feeling is even more seductive in an age of greater refinement and a more orderly, attitudinizing civilization. Art, elegance, criticism, erudition—all these our literature has since developed in greater abundance. But the imaginative, yet realistic, richness of this Elizabethan literature is a legacy that we would not for the world abandon. Nor would we seek to deny the stark truth which, in a more secure and refined civilization, we have learned more subtly to disguise or to forget for a convenient season. If Shakespeare's mirror held up to nature showed its forms magnified and intensified, it did not distort that which was and is essentially true. Nor did Marlowe and Ben Jonson, although their literary creations are not to be considered as simply realistic, fail to give a true, powerful sense of the wonder and adventurousness and fatefulness of life.

It may be remarked, too, that while the Elizabethans were not so concerned with erudite, intellectual criticism—while they had a comparatively poor store of knowledge with which to enforce skepticism—were bold in their handling of ideas as in their treatment of emotions. It was a group of pronounced skeptics that flourished most eminently in this youthful period of English literature. Their very sense of the preciousness and brevity of life drove them irresistibly to a sense of the inexorable finality of death. They were too robust, too free-living and free-thinking, for the attitudes of piety. Nor does one find in them the unreal sentimentalism of the Victorian period. Toward religion they were more intuitively (or in their direct feeling of life, realistically) skeptical than the logical Augustans, who held the reasoned and urbane philosophy of Deism, and toward the human emotions they were frank and free—their emotions were wonderfully real, not the tender and timid sentimentalities of the Victorians.

After all, we still return with an undiminished fascination to the heightened imagery and the hearty, candid, fundamental realism of Shakespeare and his spirited fellows.

(Please turn to page three)

Do You Know How Ignorant You Are?

T. Swann Harding

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During the past ten years I have made a study—more desultory than scientifically systematic—of human ignorance, including my own, which alone occupied me sufficiently long to humiliate me. I have sought repeatedly to examine the common assumptions that I make, and that I hear made by other people (except those of women which are, of course, immune to factual evidence, insofar as they are typically feminine) in the light of what has been established, or is uncertain, scientifically. This study has been very instructive. It is never a waste of your time, I have discovered, to find out how other people waste theirs.

But, seriously, I have been brought more than ever to appreciate the very seductive qualities of ignorance, or of what we of the West are accustomed to call ignorance. Ignorance induces happiness, promotes a sense of well-being, brings repletion of mind and arrogance of manner. Insofar as we possess this remarkable ability to believe what is not so in material, objective reality, we can be happy in ignorance, because whatever we do believe makes us feel as good as the genuine article, knowledge, ever could. Insofar as we can deliberately and consciously cultivate this faculty of believing the impossible, we become able thereby to achieve no mean state of content.

"Happiness is the end of life.

"It consists of: (a) The admiring contemplation of the truly admirable, and the delighted companionship of the truly delightful. This is best.

"(b) The second best is to enjoy in imagination what you know to be imaginary.

"(c) The third best is to enjoy

mistakenly what is in fact non-existent or ugly.

"There is no other good.

"All this is A B C, and no longer worth arguing about. Then imagine a man well content with a mistaken religion, a dreary home, and an unlovely wife (and this describes nearly all mankind). What happens when you educate him? It is difficult for him to change his wife, very difficult to change his religion, and impossibly difficult to change his home—and the man is uprooted and miserable for life."

H. F. Scott Stokes presented this as a devil's argument against the "uplift" in his "Perseus, of Dragons." I do not mean to subscribe to it as a whole, though it does seduce me to a very large extent. What I want to do is: 1. To regale you with just a few of the common misconceptions my fragmentary study has uncovered, including many of my own. And I ask you to observe in each case how well satisfied the customer was with his package of mental sawdust. 2. I want them to add, in conclusion, a very few abstract considerations in the effort to analyze the seductive quality of ignorance, its relationship via intuition to what we call mysticism, and its essential inadaptability to what I shall herein designate the Western way of life—meaning by that the way founded on scientific phenomenism, on objective material reality, on naturalism and on the final supremacy of reason.

Like a true egotist, and every writer and speaker is an obvious egotist, I shall start with myself. In common with all other people it is my desire to be regarded as an intelligent human being. Yet it is a matter of recorded fact, in the orderly files of some up-to-date angelic clerk, that I act like the most ignorant savage a very great part of the time.

Some ten years ago, again in common with many other people, I had the current plague. I started to say "influenza" but the massed attack of the best bacteriologists in the world has not yet told us exactly what the disease was nor what organism caused it. At any rate I had a high fever and during convalescence my hair began to fall.

This alarmed me and I made for a quinine hair tonic. I used this diligently, my hair stopped falling, the incipient thinness disappeared and I was so overjoyed that I wrote the manufacturer a spontaneous testimonial which no doubt vastly amused him. For he was presumably aware that when your hair begins to fall out it simply falls out and there you are. When it chooses to come back in, it simply does so of its own volition and is quite impervious to encouragement. Baldness is largely hereditary and is therefore what we ironically call an act of God. No treatment known to date has any definite scientific value to prevent the departure of the hair at an earlier moment than seems proper to us. Perhaps some of you have had your hair singed for the same purpose that I rubbed tonic into mine. Perhaps you were told that would close the ends of your hair and the vital juices could not then run out. If so you were told what is not true, yet I daresay we all felt much better and many of us were quite certain that the remedy cured our disease. Ignorance satisfied.

In Connecticut about 1925 there was sold a remarkable preparation called "The Sun and Moon Sacred Ointment." It was advertised as "a food for the body to destroy disease." It was said to contain "vibrations of life from the radio-activity of electricity, magnetism, electrons and atoms." This sounds rather well read quickly, and the product sold well. It consisted of vaseline with a little salicylate added as a condiment. There was also "Nature's Vital Food" which would purify the blood and cure any bodily ailment. It even prepared you for a cure of cancer; you took the medicine then put on a plaster which drew out the cancer. The preparation consisted of vegetable cathartics and some bitters. Nature is a wonderful healer after all, for both of these products, according to testimonials, cured disease. Ignorance again satisfied.

You perhaps feel inclined to laugh. Before you do so may I ask whether you ever took hypophosphites as a tonic? You probably have at some time or another and yet there is no

scientific evidence whatever to show that hypophosphites contain phosphorus in a form that we can absorb, nor is there any to show that the nerve tissues lack phosphorus in nervous exhaustion or debility when hypophosphites are usually given as a tonic. As a matter of fact posters at the American Medical Association meeting in New Orleans in 1920 denounced "Fellow's Syrup of Hypophosphites" by name as an affront to sound therapy and physicians were instructed that no scientific practitioner would ever recommend its use. But when you took it didn't you feel better? Yet, how would you know that it cured you? Wouldn't nature have healed you anyway?

Or perhaps you have taken sodium bicarbonate. Surely everyone has taken that. Physicians constantly recommend it for gastric disturbances and thousands take it of their own accord. It is rather remarkable to discover then that to date no one on earth knows how it acts on the stomach or whether it acts remedially at all. Some say that it reduces stomach acidity momentarily but that the acidity becomes higher than ever in a very few moments. Others hold that the stomach empties it into the intestine almost at once. A half dozen theories have been presented and each worker has given his evidence in existence, but we have no definite specific knowledge. We do know, however, that what is frequently called "sour stomach" is as often as not something else altogether. Indeed it may be alkaline or basic stomach, for that matter, as the feeling is about the same. Finally abnormally high acidity has been artificially created in the stomach by experimental investigators and none of the common symptoms of "sour stomach" appeared. The subject eventually complained of a slight feeling of warmth in the stomach and that was all. Yet sodium bicarbonate must have cured thousands of cases of indigestion. I was positive several times that it helped me anyway and it was eventually quite a shock to me to discover that no one knew anything about it.

The natives of Dunk Island—in case you want to go there it is west

of Australia—do not believe that the man-eating shark can kill them. In case a shark does so far forget himself as to bite a native in half, in a moment of moral weakness, the natives who observe the tragedy remark that a "debil-debil" was the murderer. They are very certain of this. No amount of factual evidence can shake their theory. Like the late Mr. Bryan facts simply do not interest them at all. So they frequently swim nonchalantly around among the sharks, happy in the thought that only a "debil-debil" can harm them. They are uncivilized of course. But the English of 100 years ago were relatively civilized, surely.

Francois Berger, now about 94 years old, wrote not long ago for the London *Sunday Times* an entertaining article about music of the past. Among other things he told that in the late 19th century a man made the statement that the beauty of Italian voices was due to the purity of that country's air and that if this air were brought to England the English voices would become equally fine. He then constructed cylinders about two feet in length, made of silver, or metal that looked like silver, proposed to fill them with Italian local air, and sold them at a high price in a shop specially opened in Oxford Street, London. They were enclosed in elegant cases, reclining on white satin paddings, and many were the dupes who paid their guineas to purchase them. One of Berger's friends who was then a leading tenor bought a cylinder which he carried to any concert at which he was to sing. He would inhale the Italian air and then sing "The Magic Flute" which, Berger tells us, was enough to make a cat laugh. Of course the cylinders actually never left England at all, but it was quite a while before the swindle was exposed, and even then many felt that its perpetrator had been rather ill-used. They liked their ignorance in silver cylinders—on satin paddings.

Again, you will perhaps feel inclined to laugh at the naivete of the late 19th century. In that case it may be as well to refer next to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* which in its issue of

September 8, 1928, exposed "Vit-O-Net." This is a large-sized electrical heating pad which is perhaps worth ten or fifteen dollars but which sells rather well at one hundred. It was invented by a gentleman named Craddock who duly got a genuine U. S. A. patent on it in 1923. It is announced as the greatest scientific discovery of the age is designed to "magnetize" the iron in the blood! It is indeed said, by its advertisers, to be the only known method of supplying vital force directly to the body via the iron-protein compound in the blood; it builds you up and recharges your cell batteries and when talking to prospects its salesmen were advised to grow voluble about "ribbons of magnetic force streaming through the body" and to seem familiar with "ultra violet rays," "diathermy," "hydrotherapy," and "electricity." The pay indeed will make you beautiful and socially attractive; it will thin you if you are too fat and fatten you if you are too thin, while it will cure every disease from anemia to vertigo. Since it sells well we must conclude that ignorance in electric pads is profitable as well as satisfactory, for of course there is no scientific evidence whatever for the effectiveness of such treatments.

Yet again, you may at times have seen advertisements of "denicotinized" tobacco and cigarettes. I have had friends who bought these products and, since the nicotine was removed, they smoke more freely than ever. As a matter of actual analytical fact only about 30 percent of the nicotine is removed from these products while you may, with some discrimination, easily select a cigarette r a tobacco of normal price and nicotine content which will run almost as low in this poison as the specially priced and treated brands. I happen to have some actual analytical figures with me in case anyone is interested in some favorite brand. It should finally be emphasized that while nicotine is the paramount poison of tobacco since it is far from agreed that tobacco smoking is necessarily harmful or that, if so, nicotine is the only compound concerned in such harmfulness. It is interesting, though, that many people have felt better while smoking "de-

nicotinized" cigarettes which actually contained more nicotine than several well-known ordinary brands!

As our capacity for this sort of thing seems inexhaustible the manufacturers quite naturally cater to it. There are, for instance, a "de-cafeinated" coffees. Knowing that Americans will do anything, no matter how grotesque, if they are told it is good for their health, these manufacturers encourage them to drink all the coffee they want now that the caffeine has been removed. The joke is, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for September 22, 1928, that the caffeine has not by any means all been removed; not even 97 percent is gone. Market coffees contain from 0.1 to 7 percent caffeine although the latter figure is very exceptional. The average cup of coffee contains 1.5 to 1.75 grain of caffeine. If the especially prepared coffees are used Blake's Refined Health Coffee will yield 1 grain per cup, and Kaffee Hag about the same. Kaffee Hag until very recently contained about .52 percent caffeine, Sanka about .32 percent; it is of course difficult to tell how much caffeine was contained by the coffee they started with and to lull the suspicion that they could, at least, have selected a normal market coffee within that caffeine range with a little care and attention to detail. Yet many of us no doubt know people who felt far better after two cups of Kaffee Hag, whereas one cup of ordinary coffee always completely devastated them. Yet the caffeine ingested was the same in both cases. Finally, while caffeine is the drug par excellence of coffee, it has not been established that it is the compound causing digestive disturbance nor, since caffeine accelerates uric acid elimination, can it be altogether condemned. In short the question is scientifically an open question, yet manufacturers have played upon it as if injury of a known sort were established. Yet ignorance satisfies everybody.

(To be continued next week)

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In the World of Books

Weekly Reviews and Other
Literary Ruminations
Isaac Goldberg

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TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SEPTUAGENARIAN

Joseph Ishill and his old "Favorite" press have been at it again. This time he is about to emerge from the woods and waters of Berkeley Heights, N. J., with a volume of homage to Havelock Ellis, hand set from frontispiece to colophon and containing numerous illustrations and documents never before published. It had been Ishill's intention to have the volume ready on Ellis' seventieth birthday, February 2, 1929. Delay, however, was unavoidable; it is altogether in the Ellisian spirit not to hasten one's work at the cost of quality. But June, I am given to understand, the book will be ready. I have contributed a Foreword to the anthology of appreciations; my work, like the rest of the labor connected with the volume, received no reward other than the pleasure of doing it. The volume—I have seen some of the articles that go to make

it—will doubtless be a rarity of its kind. Only 400 copies will be placed on sale, in addition to 30 executed in Alexandria vellum. The deluxe edition will command, indeed, the deluxe price of \$25; the regular edition will sell at \$7.50. The prices, however, should not mislead one into regarding the Ishill book as a commercial venture. It is doubtful whether he will receive adequate return for his months of toil, setting and printing two pages at a time, distributing the type, and repeating the arduous process. Following upon his similar collections dedicated to the brothers Reclus, the great Kropotkin, and Edith, wife of Havelock Ellis, this will probably crown his labors. His work as a typographer deserves a recognition which it has not yet attained.

LANGUAGE

The unwearied succession of artificial, international languages bears witness to a human need of intercommunication. Nobody has been so foolhardy as to think that Esperanto, Volapuk, Ido, or the rest of them, could ever replace a living tongue. Some have cherished expectations that overleaped common sense; most linguists, amateur or professional, have looked upon the languages as being auxiliary, supplementary in intention. (See, for a good resume of the matter, Albert Leon Guerard's *A Short History of the International Language Movement*, Horace Liveright.) When a

linguistic authority such as Otto Jespersen turns his hand to the construction of yet another world-tongue, which he calls Novial, we are sure, at least, of competence. *International Language* (Norton, New York, \$2.50) surveys the field before it gets down to Jespersen's own contribution. I recommend it not only for the intellectual exercise of lending obsequious assistance to a new birth, but also as a check-up on your own grammatical knowledge. Following the artificial construction provides great opportunity for renewing one's acquaintance with the process of his own tongue. For that matter, there is more artificiality even in natural languages than one is immediately aware of. Many of the words we employ every day were coined consciously. Much latter-day slang is an incubated vocabulary. To me, Jespersen's Novial looks surprisingly simple, but I am not a fair judge here, since I use many foreign tongues in my work and know most of the roots in advance.

Perhaps something ought to be done to the natural tongues as well. There are many contributions that could, by concerted effort, be simplified far sooner than evolution itself would do the job. There are processes at work in all tongues which show a decided tendency toward simplicity. Languages, like other organisms, evolve.

ART
What a glittering book has Rachel Annard Taylor produced in her *Leonardo the Florentine*! (Harper's, \$6.) It is, in fact, a monument to a volume to a monument of a man. It is a library, not a book. It is a history of the Renaissance; an ecstasy, a rhapsody, an organic celebration of genius. (Private note; it sent me to the Dictionary so often, that I read it with my unabridged Webster standing faithfully by my side. Private note No. 2: I have not yet finished the work, nor is it essential that I do so.) The portly tome is an iridescent fountain of image and metaphor—of hot verbal harmonies and roses of rhetoric. The reader is smothered in bouquets, and the perfume soon becomes heady. Yet he knows that he has been in a voluptuous garden. And why not? Florence itself (the Italians call it Firenze) is the City of Flowers, and Leonardo da Vinci is her universal darling.

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Telling the multifarious life of the great Leonardo—the Narcissist, the homosexual—Mrs. Taylor writes a cinematic history of his time. What an age, and what a man! Scientist, artist, engineer, philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, courtier, statesman. . . . Does the world shape such men as these in the highly specialized moment of our own day? Here is an ocean of a book, to which one returns again and again for buffeting waves and tonic refreshment. Now it engulfs you; now you ride the crest in triumph. When you have reached the end, you feel that you're entitled to a diploma. But it's well worth the time, so long as you don't make an effort to finish it at one sitting.

MUSIC

The Beggar's Opera (you may procure the libretto in the Little Blue Book Series) has come to Boston after a five-year absence, and has gone its way without official molestation. How could this have happened? Here is one of the most immoral texts ever written. Marriage is scorned; prostitution, thievery and murder are extolled; money rides high and virtue is dragged in the mire; gambling and bribery are set to irresistible tunes, and polygamy (not Polly-gamy, however, Polly is but one of Macbeth's harem of wives) crowns the night with a dance of seduced women and their illegitimate children. Was

ever such a rout of rascals to spread corruption over the city that may not read Mr. Dreiser's "American Tragedy"? The opera that made Gay rich and Rich gay (Rich was the manager) is as young as ever, although it passed its two-hundredth birthday last year. It's a ribald document, and I hereby commend it to the attention of our Literary Inquisition.

To those with a penchant for esthetic theory—excellent discipline, even when you are, like me, suspicious of all theory, on general principles—I recommend Eric Blum's short but pithy essay, *The Limitations of Music, A Study in Esthetics*. (Macmillan, \$1.75.) It is a musical "know thyself" and "be thyself." It is nothing new that the artist may rise to the heights despite, and even because of, a recognition of the limits imposed by his medium. To Blum, the limitation is a challenge to ingenuity and a fillip to the imagination.

Books on American music are not too plentiful; nor are they, ordinarily, well-written. Mr. Edward Ellsworth Hipsher, in his *American Opera and Its Composers* (Theodore Presser, Philadelphia), does not depart from the tradition of the genre so far as concerns stylistic graces. Like so many pioneers, he is intent upon his material. Certainly, in his delving, he has brought to the surface an interesting number of names

and works that might otherwise have lain upon the shelves of specialists. His standards are, to say the least eclectic; there is no intention of strict criticism; toward the closing pages he is compelled to summarize and to open up his chapters to a host of indifferent representatives. Yet his compilation serves a purpose, if only to get one started on the subject. There are programs, casts, bibliographical notes and a full index.

PHILOSOPHY

Norton has just issued Bertrand Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World* and a new edition of Professor Dewey's *Experience and Nature*. (Each sells at \$3.) "Philosophy," said Dewey, "recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men." Russell, according to the selfsame Dewey, is the apostle of enlightened common sense. Neither, if the truth must be told, is always easy to read; on the other hand, they deal in matter that hardly lends itself to a *b c* entertainment, and properly demand, of the reader, an attentiveness commensurate with their own efforts to conjure light out of darkness.

Both men bring a breath of liberation. They are among those leaders who help you to guide yourself away even from them.

Opinions and Observations

What the Editor Has Been
Thinking About
E. Haldeman-Julius

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THE PULL OF DESIRE

It is always quite amusing to me when I hear someone holding forth on strength of will, resistance to temptation, and doing the right thing. For this will power is surely an illusion. Most usually, it consists in a strong determination to get what one wants and our exertions are inspired by very desirable hopes and aims. Desire is a tricky logician. It persuades us that what is attractive to us is very good and defensible; while as for the things which appeal to others, there we may reasonably perceive a great deal of weakness.

The fact is that we are all of us strong and all of us weak, in our different ways. The excesses of B are foolish in the sight of A, and it is perfectly incomprehensible to B that A should act so strangely in some other direction, while both fundamentally are moved by their strongest desires. It is the misfortune—let us call it that—of some men to be impelled by more dangerous and destructive desires than other men. Indulging their weakness (or yielding to the strength of their desires), they injure themselves extremely. Their luckier fellows have inclinations that, while in principle no wiser, are in plain and detailed consequences less harmful. Let them exchange desires, and each would probably yield to the new impulse as he yielded to the old.

I say "probably" though I don't know that this qualification is necessary. True, there are men who are apparently strong enough to resist the attractions of obvious self-indulgence; who have, as we say, self-control and the strength to govern their appetites. That self-control is admirable and one can do no better than cultivate it to the best of one's ability. It is the Greek ideal of moderation which we should keep before us, and even in striving to follow it, even in the clear consciousness of it without its perfect practice, we shall fare better than if we had no conception of carefulness and the golden mean that safely avoids extremes.

Yet these strong men have an object in guarding themselves from self-indulgence; not a moral object, not even the simple object of preserving their health for health's sake; but some object of achievement, of winning to a certain goal, in which they would be handicapped if they gave full rein to their more superficial and temporary desires. It is, after all, another and admittedly a more admirable instance of the stronger desire gaining the victory.

Far be it from me to deny the importance of effort, of wise restraint, of maintaining a rational standard of values. Be Epicurean in the true sense, not heedlessly nor ignorantly. It is only fair and tolerant, however, to remind ourselves that most of us fail in wisdom or strength at some point. If we are misled, if we are overcome, in a comparatively slight point of conduct, we may thank our lucky hormones. But we should not forget that, in the principle of yielding to temptation, we are all "sinners" in various directions and degrees. No man can boast rightly, for example, because he is untouched by a vice which has no attractions for him. The absence of desire is the proof of a strong will.

It is not simply a question of good and bad habits. Far more important is the deeper question of char-

acter. A man may be entirely free from what are called "bad" habits, yet there may be defects in his character which he is not able or does not try to overcome; which, indeed, so little do we wish to analyze ourselves, he may deny.

It is well if we can strike a fair balance among our desires; and it is fortunate that no man has to struggle equally hard with all the temptations; our good fortune too, no doubt, that each of us has some delightful temptations, in which the game is worth the blame.

We can be happy without being too good.

THE SNOB AND THE BOSS' DAUGHTER

An Eastern professor recently caused a little flutter of surprised interest when he urged young men to be snobs. "Be a snob," said this wisecracker. "It's just as easy to marry the boss' daughter as it is to marry his stenographer." His exhortation, in its more general bearings, was really old stuff: Aim high. Hitch your wagon to a star. The best is none too good. The novelty was in giving the name of snobbery to this upward striving, in identifying the desire for self-advancement with a specious assumption of exclusiveness. Evidently this professor used the term "snob" in an incorrect sense or he was guilty of that confusion of values which is strikingly exemplified in snobbery.

What is a snob? A snob is one who thinks himself a superior person because of family or money or social position; who thinks he is too good to be friendly and associate in a spirit of equality with persons of not so proud a family, not so fine a social position, not so impressive a display of wealth; who, in a word, makes distinctions that are absurdly and contemptibly false in respect of human character, exaggerating external marks which are no true indication of worthiness. The snob is so foolish as to take pride in things which may by contrast only serve to emphasize his own essential inferiority. He snobbishly stresses his family, let us say, and thereby calls attention to the fact that he personally is poor material; he makes much of his social position, reminding us that aside from the glitter of class pretensions he is, in terms of character and individual worth, of very little interest or importance; he disports himself in a moneyed splurge, thereby showing all the more plainly how lacking he is in brains.

Snobbery is one phase of that class spirit which ranks among the most egregious historic follies of mankind and which, illustrated most impressively in the old aristocratic caste system, still exhibits itself in the modern democratic world. Snobbery of course is less certain of itself, more awkwardly, argumentatively self-conscious in our time. Before the democratic age, before the age of widespread opportunities for culture and success, the gulf between the aristocrats and the common people was so wide that they were scarcely thought of as living in the same world. The aristocrats had all the advantages of fine training, easy circumstances, high position and unquestioned power. They took their superiority for granted. They were arrogant but that arrogance was genuine and natural, never implying any faintest doubt of their superiority, any need to impress themselves for fear that they might not be recognized for what they were. These few, living elegantly at the top, were feared and envied and obsequiously honored by the masses, who had no dream of equality, or at best only a dream and nothing like a real hope or claim.

It does not follow that those aristocrats were as superior as they thought they were. To be sure, they had exclusively the opportunities of education, great action, individual

liberty (relatively) which were absolutely denied to the common run of humanity. The aristocrat and the peasant could not fairly be compared, because their opportunities differed so widely. Yet the experience of our democratic society has shown how the common man, so-called in terms of narrow social distinction, may outshine those who in dull, stupid self-adulation call themselves "the best people." Democracy, broadly speaking, has demonstrated that humanity cannot be bound by invidious class lines. It has widely taught the lesson that a man is something more than a family name, a social visiting list, or a bank account. Aristocrats, in the times when that position was hereditary and came without effort, were often foolish, contemptible in heretofore weak creatures: even their splendid opportunities could not make much of them (or vice versa), but they were decidedly less capable and admirable than many whom they despised as of lower birth.

Comparatively few of the great names in literature and learning have been aristocratic, but have been socially of humble origin; king's ministers of lowly birth have supplied the brains for monarchy; and even in affairs of state the aristocrats have made a poor showing, when one considers that they were born with power and the pretensions to leadership. One sees where the weakness lay; aristocrats had a career in merely being aristocratic, and they did not have to depend on character or brains or real effort.

Today snobbery does not have an undisputed aristocratic background and basis. In our democratic world, effort is more fairly rewarded (a comparative statement, you understand, which does not always "hold true"); chances are more sportingly distributed, as it were, and our view of human nature and the differences between men is more intelligent. We know, that is to say, that there is no proud exclusive heredity of wisdom and virtue and high character. These are the common heritages of mankind. Men are not divided into inferiors and superiors by the lines of family and race; the only differences—and they are certainly great ones—are those of opportunity.

Nor do intelligent people take a snobbish attitude toward the results of success or failure, as these are judged by the world. Granted that the man who has gained for himself (not inherited) a higher financial standing than many of his fellows has proved himself especially shrewd and capable; perhaps in a really constructive way, perhaps only in marked acquisitive talents, and usually with the benefit of luck—for what we call good and bad luck, although they are subject to rational explanation, are real factors in life. Yet this financially successful man is, man to man, no better than another who is poor or who is only in comfortable circumstances. The former's money does not prove that he is more interesting as an associate, that he is superior in character, that he is more intelligent, that in short he should be looked up to as a being of a far higher order. The rich man may have an exceptional personality and culture, he may within himself be superior; but on the other hand he may be inferior in personality, generally dull, and poor in culture.

Nor is social position, which is almost always a matter of wealth, a proof of genuine superiority. Usually, indeed, the snob is the man who confines his intimacy and his admission of equality to persons who, like himself, are not specially intelligent or interesting or admirable. He is a person of limited contacts, narrow criteria, and shallow appreciations. He shuts himself out from wider human sympathies, associations, adventures. Or one may say that, being what he is, the snob is naturally excluded from this wider sphere of living. His exclusiveness

does not advertise his superiority but rather his limitations.

Snobbery, which the Eastern professor commends, is not a stimulus to self-improvement or the development of character or the realization of a fine equality of happiness or success in life. It is a narrowing, crippling prejudice. Achievement is the test of worth; and not only achievement in terms of wealth and power; best of all is to achieve the triumph of an interesting, cultured, generously and broadly alive personality.

As for the illustration of the boss' daughter and the boss' stenographer, the snob who chooses the boss' daughter—assuming that he has the possibility of choice—may be getting the worst of it. He may be demonstrating, not how much better he is, but how much more foolish he is. The stenographer is very likely more beautiful, more capable, more interesting, more fitted to the needs of human association that is unspoiled, undistorted by the jaundice of a jejune, petty snobbery.

Of course snobbery does not absolutely preclude nor argue against the possession of excellence in character or culture; but it is a pretty safe presumption that such excellence is lacking and that, at best, it is corrupted by a viewpoint that, pretending to be fine, is in reality shoddy and cheap.

LABOR IN ENGLAND

Labor in England, as in the European countries, has remarkably able leaders; not merely trade union managers, as in America, but men who have political vision, who understand the major problems of the age, and who see things from the viewpoint of our industrialized, highly organized society. Thus the recent victory of the Labor party in England is not surprising, although thirty years ago Labor had no representation in Parliament. It has grown in response to the needs of the new age, needs of which the leaders of labor might be expected to be particularly studious and sensitive. Liberals try to compromise politically between past and present. Conservatives tend to "muddle through" in the same old way and support the vanished ethics and authority of the old order. It is the Labor party which is most frankly modern in outlook and which is less handicapped by traditions that are incongruous in the present world.

Yet, true to British caution and moderation, the Labor party does not break with old forms and traditions absolutely, but, on the contrary, tries to make them carry new meanings; not altogether a consistent procedure nor a successful one but, as things are, a politically sensible attitude. British Labor, for example, is as faithful to the tradition of royalty as any group in the kingdom. So peacefully has royalty yielded to constitutionalism in England, so well has it followed discretion in making terms with the democratic age, that it has a popularity which appears to be very secure. Labor would not be so daring as to attack the principle of kingship, perfectly correct and intelligent as such an attack would be. The king has no power over essential governmental policy in England, nor would he be so rash as to assert prerogatives that once were proud and undisputed. The worst about royalty is its parasitism, its incongruity in this democratic age, the absurdity of a mediocre ineffectual fellow like King George or the Prince of Wales being maintained in such state and luxury, when so far as downright usefulness goes they do not earn a modest competence. Yet the British public, poor as it is and vexed with severe industrial difficulties, is foolishly willing to pay for this archaic show of royalty. The rank and file of

Labor seems to share this attitude of loyalty and so good a politician as Ramsay MacDonald would not call it in question.

The recent Labor victory, while a real triumph for MacDonald and his party and indisputably a defeat for the conservative Baldwin government, was not sufficient to make the Labor party absolutely independent in their control of government. As the strongest group, it is called upon to form a government but it must depend upon the Liberals for a majority vote in Parliament. It is in no position to attempt anything revolutionary, even if it should so desire. However, British labor differs decidedly from the communistic ideal of tactics (an ideal which the Communists have been forced to hedge and restrain for practical purposes), inclining rather to the gradual and peaceable methods which have distinguished England as the great country of compromise. Labor will go slow. It may be long before it can do big, fundamental things. It can make no profound, sweeping change in the structure and policy of industrial society. Socialist ideals can at best guide it for the time and determine its dealing with the problems of capitalism.

It is encouraging, however, that the Labor party with such a man as Ramsay MacDonald at its head should be even provisionally in power in England. Undoubtedly it represents the most advanced social and political thought in that country and is at the same time fully abreast of the most vital, hopeful tendencies of the modern world. MacDonald has the real quality of a statesman. He is a politician with ideals and a definite, conscientious, intelligent point of view. He has a clear, coherent social philosophy. He understands this world we live in far better than such a man as Stanley Baldwin; he is more soundly thoughtful and far more reliable, more sincere, than Lloyd George. In the solution of domestic problems, chiefly that of unemployment, he will have in mind the welfare of the nation, the interests of the majority who are useful with hand or brain, or to use an old phrase which is an expression of common sense, "the greatest good of the greatest number." In foreign affairs, we know that MacDonald's ideals are those of a sane, pacific cooperation. His position at the head of British government is, within the obvious limits of his power and his support by his countrymen, a pledge of peace and sanity. Among the heads of government in the world today, Ramsay MacDonald is easily the soundest and broadest in progressive vision.

VOLTAIRE IN THE NEWS

Recently Voltaire's name secured a place on the front pages of many American newspapers. Copies of his famous satire, *Candide*, were seized by the customs authorities in Boston, on the ground that the French classic is obscene and therefore not fit to be admitted for circulation in this Christian country. The advertisement that a book is obscene or risqué is of course "hot" news for readers of the daily prints who, even when they agree with the principle of censorship, are still more grateful for the guidance of the censors as to what will prove to be interesting reading. The copies of *Candide* were held up by the august decree of the United States treasury department, strictly according to the law in such cases asininely provided, protecting at the first point of exposure our innocent land from literary impurities.

It seems that in this instance the guardians of morality were gratuitously active. The confiscated books are in the printed French language, and isn't anyone who reads French already immoral and past saving? Besides, good English translations of *Candide* are quite plentiful throughout the country and can be

obtained by anyone on very short notice. Characteristically, then, the effect of censorship is to encourage the perusal of forbidden literature. There is not the slightest doubt that thousands of Americans will now make haste to read *Candide* who had not previously been aware of the book. Considered in this light, perhaps we ought to thank the foolish persons who serve as the intended jailers and hangmen, in a manner of speaking, of very candid literature: except that on principle we object to folly and intolerance.

It is inordinately amusing that this famous work of literature, one of the world's most celebrated and classic satires, which has been familiarly on the reading list of intelligent people for nearly two hundred years, which is recognized by all who are competent to form a sane judgment as a work both witty and wise should after so long a time be condemned as a wicked piece of obscenity by persons bowed under the weight of ignorant political authority. It can hardly be the thought of our great government that, powerful though it is, it will exclude *Candide* and Voltaire from the broad American domain. It can only succeed, as I say, in advertising *Candide* and it can certainly not affect the singular, imperishable eminence and the appeal of Voltaire. More especially, it shows how ridiculous censorship, applying the rules of a dogmatic, purblind, "morality" to the productions of genius, cannot help being.

It may be interesting to remark, too, how different is the method of our government censorship from the method of Dr. Pangloss, the philosophic protagonist of *Candide*. Dr. Pangloss, while not moral in behavior, was ingeniously moral in his principles. He was the expounder of optimism and the defender of God's world as also of such men as held power ostensibly in God's name. The apparent evils and immoralities of the world were explained by Dr. Pangloss on principles of a superhumanly wise, superior, indeed perfect economy of nature and virtue. "All is for the best," he declared, "in the best of all possible worlds." Whatever happened was right in the Panglossian code. All things evil and good must infallibly work together for the best as directed by the wisdom of God for the welfare, albeit curiously and inscrutably adjudged, of man. Thus all criticism was wrong, futile, and presumptuous.

No doubt with this Panglossian code our very respectable authorities in the main agree. However, they are not so bold, nor so ingenious, as Dr. Pangloss in explaining the follies, crimes, and in short the imperfections of human nature nor the sad, cruel ways of inhuman nature. The method of censorship is rather to deny these evils and imperfections, to suppress the facts, to hide from the sight of unpleasantness, to compel men to shut their eyes from what is so plainly spread around them. Thus while Dr. Pangloss was a proper subject of satire in Voltaire's choicest vein, our censors expose themselves still more ludicrously. Many men have actually believed in a philosophy much the same as that of Dr. Pangloss. We have had no end of idealistic ser-

mons in justification and even glorification of the cruelties of life and the follies of man. The business of "reconciling" the facts of life with the notions of a dogmatic theology or a fanciful idealism has always seduced the Panglossian type of mind; and of course for official reasons optimism is a philosophy strongly desired by those in power, those who live by the spreading of bunk, those who from motives of self-interest or temperament or ignorance or cowardice are concerned with obscuring the truth.

So the method of Pangloss, while not intelligent, is at least workable within its limits and has proved to be widely acceptable. But the method of censorship is impossible. Facts can't be hidden. The ways of life are too familiar. Human nature is, so to speak, too open a secret. It is really more clever for these who would spread the gospel of optimism and the perfection of virtue to admit the facts and try to explain them by a reassuring, however unreasonable, theory.

To be sure, the best way of all is to view life realistically, neither to see it through the colored glasses of optimism nor to yield to it in a spirit of defeated, indifferent, hopeless pessimism. The best way is Voltaire's way: namely, to be candid in exposing the follies and injustices of men—to urge the greater use of human intelligence, the application of good sense and good will to our common problems, the cultivation of a civilized attitude—in short, before all else, to arouse men to a consciousness that the Panglossian creed is false and that in it there is no sense, no salvation.

"All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds"—that is the essentially immoral doctrine, the lie, the snare for the confusion of men's thoughts and the obstruction of their best efforts. It is this Panglossian lie, less frankly and boldly stated than in the language of Dr. Pangloss, which our authorities would support by their silly censorship. Voltaire's philosophy of life and his literary career were directed with a rare and splendid courage toward exposing the wrongs and absurdities of the uncivilized human scheme, and *Candide* served fairly in that fine purpose. He chose the weapon of satire. His theme did not allow him to be "nice" at the expense of the truth. But whoever reads *Candide* will find more than an interesting tale for an hour's diversion. He will find a lesson in that sort of common sense which is so uncommon as to merit the name of wisdom. He will be made to feel ashamed, not of the truth, but of the shameful occasion for the truth.

Curiously enough, sacred truths which men are asked to worship are so vague that nobody can tell what they mean, while homely facts (which conflict with sacred truths) are easily observed and are useful beyond measure. Do so many men prefer the former because they are more colorful and because, so beautifully irresponsible, they do not require careful thought? More curiously, men act in accordance with many facts which they deny in their beliefs.

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The Moving Finger Writes

Informal Comment on
Developments of the Week
Lloyd E. Smith

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ON SOCIETIES

Societies, formed for the prevention of this or the saving of that, sometimes do good. But they frequently go about it in the wrong way—wasting their efforts by dissipating them where they do not count. And sometimes they are working for anti-social, anti-human ends.

Consider the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A meritorious association, and one that has done much to eliminate careless cruelty—especially to horses. The S. P. C. A. has also been useful in aiding the demise of unwanted dogs, cats, and other pets. If you have a cat that needs exterminating, you call up an S. P. C. A. man, if there's one in your city, and he will see to a painless execution.

After all, though, it's rather fantastic to keep a man from whipping his horse too hard, and to ignore the original influences which may have made that man a vicious horse-whipper. Perhaps the S. P. C. A. directs some of its attention to the education of children. But whether it does or not, that is where the heart of the matter lies. When a humanitarian viewpoint is inculcated into everyone, as a part of education, cruelty will be impossible.

But such education must be wary. If it instills a sentimental abhorrence of animal suffering—no matter if that suffering is beneficial to humanity—then there is something vicious about it. I am thinking, now, of the anti-vivisectionist societies. They go on the theory that all animal suffering is to be deplored—and to be stopped, at all costs.

An anti-vivisectionist thinks of a medical school or a research laboratory as a place where pet dogs are tortured to death. He loves dogs, and he pictures his own pet animal

moaning with pain as some heartless scientist watches him writhe. Immediately the anti-vivisectionist loses all his sense of values, and he determines that, to save the dogs, medical research must be abolished! In the first place, the anti-vivisectionist has an exaggerated idea of the suffering of animals used for research purposes. Any scientist can tell you that the suffering is seldom a conscious experience. Even a human being may moan when not conscious of suffering; he seems in dire agony, but his brain knows nothing of it.

In the second place, and this is the most important aspect of the question, the anti-vivisectionist abhors suffering, or the appearance of suffering, and will not admit that any benefit justifies it. If testing drugs on a hundred dogs can save one human being suffering, is it not worth the price? If the lives of five hundred dogs can save the life of one baby, is the price not small? Yet the numbers are not so disproportionate as that.

If the anti-vivisectionist hates suffering so much, let him first direct his energies toward reducing the suffering of human beings. There is a real field for his efforts. Let him adjust his sense of values. Let him aid in helping crippled children, in providing means for wiping out the scourge of infantile paralysis, for example. If he gets human suffering pretty well eliminated, he can then turn his attention to the animal kingdom—and by that time vivisection will be unnecessary.

The anti-vivisectionist thinks the moaning of a dog more terrible to hear than the agonized cries of a baby. As some clever writer said: an anti-vivisectionist is a man who chokes at a guinea pig and swallows a baby!

I heard about a mother who discovered her baby had swallowed an open safety pin. She called a doctor in hysterical excitement. The doctor told her to use a button-hook or something and get the pin out of the child's throat, and that he would get there as soon as possible. But the mother couldn't get the pin out—she could not bring herself (so she said) to hurt the child by pulling the lacerating pin from the flesh! That mother is an example of the over-sentimentalized type that makes

a rabid anti-vivisectionist. She did not know how to choose between the lesser of two evils. She could not hurt her child for an instant in order to save his life. An anti-vivisectionist cannot allow a few animals to give up their lives in order that human beings may live longer and more happily.

DO THEY FORGET?

Either such people had abnormal childhoods, or they forget their childhood days too easily. They are a constant source of amazement to me—people who seem to have no knowledge of childhood whatever. They cannot remember how they felt when they were children; somehow, in passing into what the law recognizes as the adult state, these people have obliterated from their memories everything they thought and did as children.

A clipping came in the mail, from a kind reader whose letter, if there was one, became detached, containing these sentences (in a letter to the editor of a newspaper):

Neither a young person nor an adult needs to know much about sex. I say "needs" to know. Nature herself teaches even children the nature of sexual sins. Or if they do not heed nature's warnings, a mere hint from a parent will set a child on the right track. The sexual instinct is so strongly implanted in our natures that even children almost instinctively know what is right and what is wrong in sex life. Their natural curiosity about sex matters sets them to thinking about sex matters just as the foreknowledge of a hundred more or less superstitious ways they acquire a better and truer knowledge of sex than any direct instruction could give them. Giving young persons direct instruction on sex matters puts sex in the foreground of their lives and gives it undue importance in their eyes. It also has a bad effect upon their morals, for in the heyday of life young persons feel rather than think about sex matters. It is only necessary to prize them of a few fundamental points about sex and to impress upon them the necessity of virtue and of self-control.

Is it not wonderful? Do you know of any subject such that "more or less superstitious" ways of finding out about it can give "a better and truer knowledge than any direct instruction"? Such a notion is absurd—about anything, let alone sex!

But this writer (he is a man) seems to forget much. Can he be ignorant of the fact that as a boy

he must have had an overpowering curiosity about such things? Has he forgotten that, if he was a normal boy, parental advice—unless it was specific, honest, and to the point (as it probably was not)—affected his curiosity but little, except perhaps to what it? Does he think that the knowledge he gained in "superstitious" ways was truer and better than knowledge he has perhaps gained since his boyhood? Or hasn't he added to the knowledge he gained in what he thinks was so sure and reliable a fashion?

It is manifestly absurd that gutter gossip can be truer than physiology. Gutter gossip may be true—it often is. But it is grim truth, often unnecessarily besmirched with an unwholesome cynicism. Healthier and saner sexual living is a direct outgrowth of healthful, sane teaching about sex.

The Little Blue Books, certainly, have accomplished a worthy purpose in providing, at a price everyone can afford, scientifically reliable information about the facts of life, love and sex.

"DELICACY AND PASSION"

Miriam Allen deFord, who is the wife of Maynard Shipley, is well known among Little Blue Book readers for her various and varied books. A Pennsylvania enthusiast wrote to Harry Hansen, via his department in *Harper's*, asking where he could get a metrical translation of the poems of Catullus, one of the grand bards of Roman antiquity. Miriam Allen deFord sent this man a copy of Little Blue Book No. 832, *The Life and Poems of Catullus*, which she edited and translated. He replied:

I have long known Little Blue Book No. 832 and your translations were directly responsible for the rekindled interest in Catullus that I have now written Mr. Hansen after a search of the New York shops had failed to reveal a complete translation that caught Catullus' delicacy and passion, as you have caught them. I do not know the translation Mr. Hansen recommended to me, but it cannot be more felicitous. Please do not think this mere effusiveness; it is the sincere utterance of one to whom your translations have given much pleasure.

Incidentally, and by the way, Mr. Shipley takes me to task for "bawling him out" in these columns about an error he made without printing his explanation. He complained be-

cause we listed his *Americans of a Million Years Ago* (Little Blue Book No. 1325) in a recent catalog with the number of years as a "billion." Or something like that. Anyway, it should be a million, and I should have explained later that Mr. Shipley said that his stenographer made the mistake and that his stenographer is also his wife, so he trusts her and does not always read her letters for mistakes. I, of course, was being genially chiding; I meant no reflection on Mr. Shipley's scientific accuracy, and I now mean to imply no discredit to the typist's accuracy either.

FAVORITES

The Pennsylvania reader's tribute (above) to the Little Blue Book edition of Catullus gives me an idea. Have you a favorite Little Blue Book? What is your favorite Little Blue Book, and why?

I know it's not always possible to pick out one book and set it above all others. With very close to 1,800 different titles now in the Little Blue Book series, it should be rather difficult to pick a favorite. But if there is one Little Blue Book which you read with great pleasure, and you regard it as among your favorites, why not write a letter about it?

Any letters that merit publication will be printed in this department. Address all such letters simply to Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kans.—send them, preferably, separate from any orders for books. To every reader who writes a letter good enough to be printed here, I'll send a copy of the favorite Little Blue Book, in each instance, and I'll persuade the Editor to write his signature on the title page thereof. The reasons a book is your favorite will count most in picking out the letters.

THE BATTLE FLEET!

Someone has befriended Uncle Sam's Navy by sending in a five-dollar bill for fifty ten-week trial subscriptions to *The American Freeman*. These subscriptions are going to officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, aboard the U. S. S. *New Mexico*, flagship of the Battle Fleet. This, I believe, is the most unusual subscription order we have ever received.

OLD-TIMERS

Speaking of oldest subscribers, we must not overlook Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Cook, Grant's Pass, Ore. They have just written, explaining that they too "can be put in the oldest subscribers class." They go on to say: "We have read the paper continuously since we first established our home here in 1896. Mr. Wayland was editor at that time. Fred Warren later became editor. But when E. H. J. became its editor, it took on new life and color and with each succeeding issue our enjoyment and admiration increased. Indeed, we are not only familiar with the H. J. publications, but love them, and through them we have learned to know and love every member of his household, including Ajax Simba. We should add, too, that these publications have been to us our only means of real enlightenment and education—opportunity for these having been denied us in childhood."

IN VALIANT DEFENSE

Chris. Ruste, Montrose, S. D., rallied readily to the defense of E. Haldeman-Julius, not long ago, when he was attacked by a professor in Madison, S. D. The following open letter, addressed to Prof. Karl E. Mundt, and signed by Chris. Ruste, was printed in the *Montrose Herald*:

On May 25, I was present at the graduation exercises in Montrose. I was very much pleased with your talk to the graduation class and stressing of the point of service to humanity; also your emphasis on moral courage, but just why you sprang your unwarranted attack on Haldeman-Julius and Darrow remains a mystery. Certainly if anyone is fighting for a principle which he sincerely believes to be for the good of humanity, that man is Haldeman-Julius. His "University in Print," his "Little Blue Books" at five cents each have been an educational influence of tremendous import. Ignorance and bigotry tremble in their fair winds before the man of Haldeman-Julius. Now is not this constructive effort of the highest order to lift the load of heavy superstition from the backs of mankind and set them free? Anyone familiar with the history of the "dark ages" and all the misery that humanity groaned under in this most Christian era from year 400 to year 1500 must admit that the spread of free thought and not any other influence lifted humanity out of the mire of superstition. Do you not believe that it takes moral courage for Haldeman-Julius to stand out against these ingrown superstitions?

You do not believe that it takes moral courage for me to write these lines? I, a minister's son, seeing the

pernicious effect for religion on morals and ethical behavior deliberately sign myself.
Yours for free thought, free speech and free press.
Thank you, Mr. Ruste!

SHOP TALK

Two names more to be added to the list of Who's Who in Debunked America, in the *Debunker Jubilee Souvenir Number*: W. J. Kilgore, Box 31, National Military Home, Calif., and A. J. Hallman, 194 Washington St., Jersey City, N. J. We are very sorry these names were accidentally omitted. All owners of the *Jubilee Souvenir Number* please note, and rectify these omissions.

"I like *The American Freeman* very much," says Ernest H. Orma, Selkirk, N. Y. "though the latest article on Cardinal O'Connell, by Joseph McCabe, nearly lost me the friendship of a man I have to work with every day. Catholics don't like McCabe."

The July *Debunker* contains a fine new photograph of Joseph McCabe for the frontpiece. So attractive is the picture that J. Ayrton, Ellensburg, Wash., was induced to write this pangyric: "As subscriber-from-the-first to 'our' *Debunker*, I feel that I just must send a word of compliment, thanks, for the splendid picture of the greatest man I know anything of, meaning Joseph McCabe. By golly, he doesn't look over 48, does he? Yet I think you said he was 68."

Heinz Norden, of the Haldeman-Julius editorial staff, left Girard about three weeks ago for an experimental trek to New Orleans. Arriving there, he set up his typewriter to do some Little Blue Books. To date, he has sent in two acceptable manuscripts: *Facts You Should Know About Poisons* and *The Famous Inventions of Thomas Edison*.

FARMINGTON

By Clarence Darrow
30c Postpaid

Farmington, Clarence Darrow's review of his boyhood, is now ready as Big Blue Book No. B-49. Send 30 cents for your copy to Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kans.

Why We Write Like Human Beings

E. Haldeman-Julius

Continued from page one

They were dramatic, and they realized that the drama of life was more compelling than any drama of theology that could be devised. Nothing in Dante or Milton can equal in forceful truth and poignancy the stark, natural dramas of Shakespeare. Those Elizabethan giants confronted life with boldness and gusto and without much illusion.

In the Augustan period, in the first half of the eighteenth century, we find that literature, represent-

ing what might perhaps be called an interesting transition between Elizabethanism and Victorianism, has marked differences from both of these periods. Clearly, literature in the time of Swift and Pope did not display the freedom, the richness nor the extravagance of the Elizabethans. At the same time, it had not come under such restraints as were visible a century later among the Victorians. The taboo of sex was already making itself tentatively felt, although Fielding wrote at least one novel (*Tom Jones*) that had a Shakespearean breath and candor and Sterne, having the elegant skepticism and unpretentious sentimentality of the Augustan period, described sex almost as frankly as Shakespeare had. Swift, although he did not hesitate to be "vulgar" on occasion, was reticent on the subject of sex.

One perceives, however, that a certain refinement has come into

literature. I do not mean refinement in the sense of puritanism, nor refinement merely in the moral attitude, but a more classical conception of style and an air of polished restraint and reflection in the outlook upon life. Pope's carefully balanced rhymes and sentiments come at once to mind. He was the arbiter elegantiarum, as Swift was the great original, of Augustan literature. He was obviously far removed from the tempestuous, overflowing, "vulgar" style of the Shakespearean period; more careful in literary technique; more logically reflective (rather than brilliantly intuitive) in his attitude toward the problems of life and conduct.

Here we see how necessary it is to maintain a catholic hospitality toward all forms of literature. It is not really that one is pointing out faults in a Shakespeare or a Pope, nor captiously comparing one with the other, but rather that one is trying to understand their different kinds of merit. For Pope might as truly be called a genius as Shakespeare: although one thinks of him more as an ingeniously, studiously talented individual. He created almost perfect rhymes, phrases unrivaled for clarity and justness of sentiment, and he had a mind that was refined, orderly and intellectual. He was not perhaps as completely a skeptic as Shakespeare or Marlowe, but he was far above the superstitions that were rife in his age. He had no childish, crude notions of God, Paradise and theology. He expounded a rationalism which laid sensible emphasis upon the study of nature and man, and his code of ethics was rationally human and social rather than theological.

Pope is more than individually important because he represented these tendencies that were marked in the Augustan period: namely, a more classical literary style, a rationalism that was temperate but firm and that drew its support from natural philosophy, and a moralism that was for the most part unobjectionable but that already began to foreshadow the excessive restraints and reticences of the Victorian period.

It may be said that the great Elizabethans did not bother about religion. They did not attempt to bring forward any impressive philosophy of nature to oppose to theology. They were, it seems, more spontaneously skeptical. In contrast, the deistic skeptics of the Augustan period reasoned seriously about religion and they felt, not by a strong instinctive realism that realized the irreligiousness of life, but by a deliberate effort of logic, by a dislike of fanaticism and crude superstition, that orthodoxy was an inadequate school of thought.

Again, the scientific attitude was becoming familiar in the time of Pope (who was a contemporary of Voltaire), and although science had yet to achieve its great triumphs and was not for another hundred years to deliver the final blow to theology, there was a growing conviction that in the study of nature

rather than in dogmatic, fanciful speculations was to be discovered the truth.

Compared to our time, the Augustan period was still marked by a great deal of crudity and insecurity and violence. But there was a conception, among intelligent men, of order and refinement and human rights. As a social conception, it was limited; individualism was still the vigorous ruling principle, and in fact the philosophy of a broad, ethical individualism was to reach its full flower in the Victorian period. There was, however, a belief in natural rights (as opposed to dogma and revelation) and a dawning code of individual ethics and responsibility. Man was to cultivate virtue for natural and social reasons. There was reasoning that in some ways reminds one of the ancient philosophers of ethics, and that at times fell into idealistic assumptions that would not bear analysis.

It is worthy of note, by the way, that the writers of the Augustan period were more familiar with the ancient classics, ancient ethics, and ancient history than were Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Ideal standards, encouraged by the glamour of the civilized past of Greece and Rome, made a strong appeal to the men who were interested in culture and enlightenment. There was a tendency to reason out a civilized attitude toward life which, while not entirely absent in the Elizabethan period, was not so marked: the Elizabethans were stronger in dramatic feeling, in poetic imagination, in reaction to the powerful aspects of nature: they were not as cultivated, as deliberately rationalistic, as philosophic in a careful, conscientious, purposeful way as were the Augustan writers who stood in the forefront of their time. Social idealism was also beginning to assert itself strongly, though as yet imperfectly and confusedly, in the Augustan period; while in the age of Shakespeare there was scarcely any social idealism worthy of the name.

Morals, both as practiced in life and as described in literature, were still free in the Augustan period but they were changing. True, Fielding and Sterne could write more freely than they would have been able to write a hundred years later. Swift could write so strongly, so "vulgarily," that the popular edition of *Gulliver's Travels* is expurgated today and was too scandalous for the edification of a genuine Victorian. Yet there was the gentle Addison who held forth on the subject of the quiet, virtuous, serene life and who, said Swift, "had virtue enough to give reputation to an age." In Addison one has a forerunner of Victorianism, more limpid and unforced however, more tolerant and wholesomely worldly, less burdened with a sense of the sinfulness of life. He had, along with his simplicity, a polish and refinement that was characteristic in the literary temper of his period, a choice and

studied approach to life which is remarkably in contrast with the exuberantly hearty naturalness and torrential poetic realism of Shakespeare. Again, in Goldsmith we observe the same Augustan refinement of style and a gentle attitude toward life.

There is nothing exciting, nothing grand, nothing challenging one's sense of wonder or disillusionment in this literature, except in the writings of Dean Swift. He certainly could be fierce, but in a direct, restrained, severely simple style. *Gulliver's Travels* is an intellectual satire, a coldly thorough indictment of the human race. One cannot imagine *Gulliver's Travels* as a Victorian product. Contrast it with the satire of Thackeray, which is always mixed with sentimentality and is all too heavily obvious in moral purpose. Swift was no ideal rationalist, yet he had the rationalistic temper. His reasoned, skeptical satires are plainly incompatible with a religious cast of mind: one can find no trace of genuine piety in his writings.

On the other hand, while Swift had a very real, original genius and while below the calm surface of his style there burned fierce fires in the real man, he was not fervent and prodigal and imaginative as was Shakespeare. He was devoid alike of the magnificent fancy of the Elizabethans and the tame, sentimental fancy of the Victorians. He was Augustan in style and, for all his individual differences, faithful to that period in the expressed tone of his mind and in the rationalism (i. e., the emphasis upon reason rather than emotion) of his viewpoint.

The Augustans produced a worthy and significant literature, which we quietly appreciate although it does not overwhelm us with enthusiasm. If they were narrow in their conception of style, nevertheless they were lucid and skillful and nearly always managed to be interesting. If their ideas were not great, those ideas tended agreeably toward that common sense which has more and more, consistently, turned the human mind from superstition. It is easy to find assumptions in Pope which we know today are not scientific, but he was in the advanced movement of thought in his day. It was a period that had (or has for us) an intelligent, quiet charm and displayed some of the best characteristics of the English mind.

IV

Undoubtedly what impresses one most in the literature, as in the social attitude, of the Victorians is the excessive morality that held sway. And of special significance is the puritanical, sex-suppressing phase of morality that dominated the English mind for nearly a century. It does not follow from this that sex was actually put aside nor even that it was regarded calmly and adjustment to it made with easy, self-denying placidity. Nor does their literature signify that the Victorians were perfectly sincere,

unspiciuously and effortlessly pure, as chaste—almost epicene—in their lives as in their literature. They could not deny human nature and eventually their evident failure lag to the abandoning of the foolish effort. The smug, mediocre queen whose name was given to the period (and thereby the talented and able men who made Victorian literature are unfairly identified with the inferiority of their queen) would doubtless have been scandalized had she known the half of what really went on beneath the surface of puritanism.

But let us grant that the Victorians made a strong, sincere effort to enforce chastity upon English life and that they did their best to live up to an ideal of tamed, passionless modesty and self-denial in sex. It was nevertheless an attitude

doomed to disillusionment and failure. Perhaps it is also true that some theories and practices that have been encouraged in a spirit of revolt against Victorianism will be only temporary; however, the rationalist, who rejects dogmas and prejudices in any sphere of life, is not concerned to defend any extreme; and, as I am now discussing the Victorian period, I emphasize simply the fact that that period was guilty of an absurd, impossible extremism.

Their yearning for a purity that was in fact an uneasy kind of sex-consciousness succeeded, one may say, rather better in their literature than in their lives. Yet literature, like life, takes its revenge for such suppressions and omissions. The Victorians, by trying to be too strait-laced, cheated themselves out

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By Nan Britton

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In the August DEBUNKER

E. Haldeman-Julius
in Reply to

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of a great deal of spontaneous joy. They did not live in a complete, natural way and (as Lytton Strachey shows to some extent in his *Reveries*) they sought odd, terrific compensations.

But what was the result of their attitude as shown in literature? It resulted in the incongruity which is illustrated by the story of the nice old lady who asked at a bookstore for "a nice love story without any sex." Sexless love must ever seem unreal and disappointing, just as it appears in the great Victorian novels. Moreover, it is childish. Love, in the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, never is convincing but always masquerades feebly as a child's game; and when Thackeray attempts to portray an adventurous, a woman of loose principles, as in *Becky Sharp*, he turns out as sorry a puppet as one could imagine. Becky is actually as sexless as Dickens' Alice and all the other faint, stiff images of uninspired automatons that are supposed to pass for women in the Victorian novels.

However, an inanimate and spurious atmosphere of love obtrudes all the more noticeably on the stage of Victorian fiction. Unable to approach it naturally, yet it is impossible for Dickens and Thackeray to avoid the subject of love. It is the chief theme and *modus operandi* of most Victorian fiction, excluding other great possibilities of fancy and drama in life. Certain novels, and these the most admired of the period, are simply saturated in sentimentality which is compounded curiously of "love without sex." These novelists seemed to maintain the ridiculous fallacy that the supreme end and aim in life was love—and love, too, for pale, unreal, sexless figures of femininity.

That love is a compelling force no one denies, but assuredly not the type of love that is on display in the Victorian novels. It is inconceivable that Thackeray's *Becky Sharp* could be a great influence for good or evil in a man's life or that anyone ever loved with the same motives and in the same manner as are portrayed in the saccharine, proper, weepy novels of Dickens. If the Victorians did love in that manner, then it is no wonder that they knew so little about love and were unable to create the convincing illusion of love in their novels. One suspects, however, that Thackeray—who admired Fielding's "whole history of a man"—could, had he been free, have given a history of similar flesh-and-blood truthfulness. One is not disposed to blame Dickens and Thackeray—although their contemporary, George Meredith, who was not a Victorian in spirit, wrote more vividly and passionately about love; though he was not as frank about the physical basis of love as was Thomas Hardy, whose rebellion against the sad Victorian force shocked readers who were not yet ready for a mature presentation of the potent forces of life.

However, Victorian literature did not tend toward the really dramatic, toward the study of great passions in any sphere of life; and it was not even romantic in the grand manner. Its distinctive tone was more that of quiet, unexceptionable descriptions of mediocre, daily life, of characters who moved unhurriedly with the current of minor things. True, Dickens produced an assortment of odd characters (or caricatures) and described with a sympathy that does him credit as a man if not infallibly as an artist the poor, neglected, seamy side of life. Yet the poverty in Dickens' fictional world is generally of a pathetic and quietly deplorable sort, and he even suggests hypothetical virtues in a kind of life that is just a grade above downright poverty.

THE KEY TO LOVE & SEX

By Joseph McCabe

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There is no doubt that the contentments of the commonplace, the virtues of common and dutiful and unreflective life, stood high in the honest regard of Dickens. For all his low life and his eccentric types, the sense of placid quotidian "romance" is marked throughout his fiction. He portrays no such world of urgent passion, conflict, and soundly, vividly analyzed human nature as one finds in the novels of Balzac. Thackeray, while more intellectual and more literarily skilled, is more respectable than Dickens and he rarely hints at any save fashionable vice.

And the awareness of a great human world of issues, of problems fundamental and immense in life and character, is scarcely perceptible in the Victorian novels (excepting the novels of George Meredith). They are very English, very restricted in vision, not so boldly imaginative, so basically realistic, so cosmopolitan as French novels of the same period. How compare them with the living, fully observant, world-significant novels of Flaubert or Balzac or even (romantic and half-mystic that he was) Victor Hugo? It was a limited world in which the Victorians dwelt so unsuspiciously and so incuriously; and while the actual life must certainly have been more interesting than the bounds of their literature would describe or justify, nevertheless that literature does not unfairly reflect Victorian style of life.

Comparison is illuminating. In Victorian literature that was imaginative in its aim there was a great deal more sentimentality than appeared in French imaginative literature. Those Victorian novels were crowded with tender scenes. Tears rolled copiously, just as laughter was always overdone—and both were therefore lacking in reality. But French literature, unsentimental in its clarity and sense of proportion, was more thoughtful and more sympathetic in a broad, convincing way: sentimentality and sympathy of the truly imaginative, intelligent kind are evidently not the same. To have feelings of real insight one must understand life, one must view it with a broad and tolerant comprehension. That can scarcely be done through the medium of the Victorian novels, which on the one hand are shallowly sentimental and on the other hand are severely, unconsciously moralistic.

At every turn in the typical English novel of the Dickens-Thackeray period one stumbles over the manifestations of moral purpose. All is underscored with a heavy, censorious pen. "Good" and "evil" are always far apart, strange and irrational opposites, the one all white and the other all black. Strong, true studies of character would not be consistent with the Victorian moral aim, so in their place we have homilies on "sweetness and light," parables of severe, unimaginative virtue, sermons telling men and women how to cultivate the common-place morality that was indifferent to the larger problems and possibilities of life. And they were conventional, illusive, unscientific lessons of virtue that were taught so self-consciously by the Victorian novelists.

Anyway, the need of imaginative literature is to be alive, to be realistic (though not in a narrow sense), and to let the moral, if any, be implicitly conveyed by action that is intelligently ordered and explained by the technique of art rather than by theology or pedagogy: the novelist is not properly a preacher or a teacher but an artist. Handicapped by puritanism, piety, and sentimentality, forcing their talents into the straitjacket of moral purpose, the Victorian novelists could not be full-length artists.

There is one phase of Victorian literature—its scholarly and critical rather than its imaginative literature—which recommends itself more favorably to the free-minded readers of our time. I refer to that rationalism which was exemplified in the thought of such men as John Stuart Mill, John Morley, Lecky and (after he had sensibly backslidden from an awkward early state of grace) the historian Froude. And we must remember that at the peak of the Victorian age the bomb of Darwinism—and the many controversial bombs hurled by Muxley and his fellow warriors for scientific truth—exploded in the camp of theology.

Now, I should not place the rationalism of the Victorian scholars on a level with the more thoroughgoing and courageous rationalism of the present day. Or perhaps I should not say that we are more courageous today, but that we have a farther perspective of remoteness from that old theology and are more familiarly and widely confined in the scientific point of view. But certainly, while they were bold in certain directions, the Victorian rationalists were very polite to religion. They seem to have felt that it was due to their respectability that they should bow considerably, even reverently, to the institution whose dogmas they found to be childish, un-historical, and irrational. It was even felt that a quality of reverence was owing to the superstition that was fashionable: that sincere worship, no matter of what crude and fantastic illusions, should be met with genuflections of unbelieving but worshipful respect; that a falsehood

in the name of religion should be venerated, that there was something fine and touching in men's worship of moldy images and doctrines. The skeptic today makes no such compromise: he will not defer by so much as the slightest gesture to a worship which he recognizes as foolish.

Even so, we cannot but honor the Victorian rationalists. They did brave, intelligent, and essential work in behalf of enlightenment. If their moral horizon was almost as narrow as that of the contemporary novelists, at any rate one must give credit to the superiority of the scholarly literature over the imaginative literature of the Victorian period.

Perhaps the critic writing fifty or a hundred years from now will be able more correctly to estimate the meaning and importance of our present literature than we can. The period will have been finally defined; its work will have been done; its genesis and significance can be traced with the eye of impartial (relatively impartial) judgment. Partiality, I might say parenthetically, is unavoidable in judging any period: the critic, that is to say, will have a preference for one period over another, which does not mean that his view will be the less fair, sound or truthful. The intelligent requirement making a judgment, favorable or the reverse, is first of all that it shall be made after a full and careful survey of the data. I have a greater liking for the spirit of the Elizabethan period than for the Victorian, yet I hold myself guiltless of jumping to a conclusion without knowledge—of prejudging before hearing the evidence. Naturally, I like a free literature much better than a literature that is hedged by narrow conventions; and by the same token the skeptical tone in literature is more interesting and important to my view than the pious tone. One must have a point of view—and what point of view is so safe and dependable, so guarded from error, as the rationalistic?

Yet if the critic of the future can see our period in a perspective more bright and complete and dissociated from the dust and din of controversy, it is nevertheless true that one can now perceive fairly and accurately the main features of significance in our literature. About the fact that we of the past decade and a half have lived in a literary renaissance there can be no dispute. Our literature in all branches of recent years has been more vigorous, original, daring, free than at any time since the Augustan period—or, better, I should say that we match the Elizabethans in our free treatment of all themes, in our frank and natural attitude toward life, although we have not the same spirit of strong, ardent, dramatic magnificence and richness. We are, perhaps, more intellectual and less emotional; in our freedom we are more akin to the Elizabethans, while in their intellectual tone, in our trained and critical attitude, we are more akin to the Augustans.

Of one thing there can be absolutely no doubt: namely, our superiority over the period that immediately went before us—and this is especially true in America, where until the present renaissance literature was, critically speaking, at a low ebb. For years America had been swamped with a tide of unimaginative, uncritical fiction, drama, poetry and books of patriotic and religious purpose. Those who practiced the trade of fiction dealt merely with puppets and with conventional, stereotyped situations. Criticism of life, speaking in the broadest sense, was entirely lacking. A vision, not esoteric but penetrating and realistic, was banned by the puritanism that held a rigid domination over American life and literature.

In England itself the situation was far better. The rebellion of the '90s, although it quickly lost its peculiar characteristics, inaugurated a new freedom and while American novelists were turning out the same old sentimental, stale romances, such Englishmen as Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, Conrad, Arnold Bennett, Arthur Morrison, George Moore and others were producing literature of real honesty and talent and significance. Furthermore, these Englishmen had a leading recognition in their own country. They were not kicked down and out by a seemingly all-powerful opposition to intelligent, vital literature.

Contrarily, in America such lone forerunners of our period as Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser were

jumped upon fiercely by the defenders of the post-Civil War school of shallow, insincere literature. America was not ready for truth, criticism, and boldly imaginative work. When I say "imaginative," by the way, I do not imply the opposite of realism. I have in mind the very most important realism—namely, the art of seeing, beneath the conventional surface, the true significance of character and social life; and that requires, of course, the insight of imagination and a more curious, sympathetic viewpoint. For it is the sympathy of a novelist like Dreiser for the real struggles of life, the real problems of character, the fundamental human values that leads him to write novels which, to the puritanical and patriotic reader, seem harsh and scandalous and unfriendly to his native land. Such a man as Dreiser is not interested in conventional standards, in dogmatic moralities, in false sentimentalities and distortions of life; but he is really interested in life itself.

That is what we ask of the novelist, as we ask of any imaginative writer, or of any critic of life: that he give us the truth of life. We want the convincing air of reality, although poetry and even romance (a true, authentic romance) may be communicated through the medium of an honest realism. In truth, to catch the genuine significance of life and character, to produce realistically important work, requires an order of imagination which is infinitely superior to the mere tricky inventiveness of popular romance, indifferent to the subtle and urgent issues of real life. There is no art in handling puppets and in contriving easy, pleasing, mercifully simplified situations. To produce, artistically speaking, the powerful and moving impression of real life in literature is obviously a more difficult and admirable business than to produce the illusion of unreal life. It is the creative artist who is important and will endure, not the fellow who has simply caught the technique of a few old, petty, lifeless tricks.

It is this air of reality, which is at the same time genuinely creative, that flourishes itself with a fine gusto in American literature of our period. Nor is it merely that our literary artists are honestly going to life—to contemporary life, high and low and everywhere—for their themes; but there is also successfully demonstrated in our day a large body of criticism of life. Our novels, poetry, dramas are written under the inspiration of a desire not only to understand life but to re-value it—to make new values, perhaps, or sometimes—to reestablish old values that have been lost. This is why in some respects our literature today has affinities with the Elizabethans for their freedom and gusto (also for their tone of skepticism) and with the Augustans for their sane, critical intelligence; and indeed wherever literature, in the person of a single genius or in the general spirit of an age, has been really free, we discover the influences of what we now call modernism. It is the rebels and humanists in all periods of literature that we appreciate today and in whom we recognize the modern spirit. Great writers have been great because they have had intelligence, freedom and originality; because they have been in the forefront of creative art and progressive thought; because, in a word, they have been intensely and understandingly alive.

Aliveness is what even the most unfriendly critic cannot deny in our contemporary literature. It is instinct with the interesting, seeking, colorful, many-sided life of our time. Lay figures, dead issues, unrealities are forgotten or, when they obtrude, they are impatiently scorned. Life in all its beauty and conflict and folly and strange blindness and misunderstandings and ever-changing aspects has overridden all reticences, all denials and suppressions, and has burst triumphantly forth in our literature.

Idealism there is, to be sure, yet literature cannot escape its function as a criticism of life: the only question is whether that criticism is true in substance and artistic in style. Phases of the common life, or standards and ideas that have ignorantly and falsely a sway over the minds of the less cultured, follies and evils that still disfigure our civilization—these are exposed in satire or in our lively controversial writings or in that imaginative work which, dealing with realities with the insight of more sensitive, thoughtful values, tears the mask from our pretenses and brings the truth out of falsehood and confusion.

Yet this criticism, while unescapable, and while inevitably to be found in some form in a truthful study of life, is implied in our best fiction, woven skillfully into its very texture of action and character, rather than drug in obtrusively, awkwardly by the heels. Naturally a writer will have his viewpoint: the only artistic demand upon him is that he shall convey that viewpoint skillfully, entertainingly, and truthfully—that, first and last, his work shall be alive. We do not have the conventional moral purpose of the Victorians: the "moral," if any, follows naturally upon the study of life, it is involved in the action and not in comment upon the action; and,

again, our viewpoint is more critical, more intelligent, basically more scientific.

We can see clearly upon what false premises the Victorians described and judged life. They saw things through a fog of piety and sentimentality. Their attitude was predetermined by religion and by arbitrary moral standards, by the weight of respectable opinion rather than by an unprejudiced, truth-seeking observation of life; whereas today the scientific attitude is more generally found in literature; that is to say, our significant writers, who are genuinely informed by the spirit of the age, observe life and report upon it without the hampering of handed-down prejudice.

There has never been a period of literature in which the scientific observation of character, in which the disposition to go inquiringly to life for understanding and for a point of view soundly realistic, has been so marked. We do not have so much speculation upon human nature and moral ideas and the like; what we have is a study of these phenomena, an honest effort to discover how and why men behave, what moral ideas will stand the test of reality. Idealism is less a matter of mere theory and more a matter of definite analysis and objective. It is this scientific attitude which enlarges and vitalizes our literature, and which extends, too, through all departments of our literature. History and biography have not only been raised in our time to the charm and aliveness of literary art, but they have been freed from former conventionalities and preconceptions and false ideals, patriotic or pious, and given the forceful, authentic dignity of a scientific viewpoint. Truth is, first and last, what our real artists and our real scholars value. It is realized that, whether in fiction or in biography or in the essay, the writer must build on a solid foundation of facts. He must be closely, observingly in touch with life and out of his material must be forged a true, although artistically arranged, picture.

Old codes and values no longer have authority in the main, significant literature of our time. And the chief article in an arbitrary, unscientific code—namely, that certain subjects are too sacred or too indecent or too dangerous to be dealt with freely—has been rather effectually smashed, in spite of the annoyance which we still have from stupid censors. The two finest characteristics of our literary period are the tendency of scientific observation and understanding and the spirit of curious, fearless freedom.

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I have tried to be careful, as well as judiciously frank. I have related only such matters as any lady of refinement may safely tell to another lady of refinement when there are no gentlemen present. In other words, I have included nothing which is likely to offend the censors. For I don't want the account of my own life to remind these pious gentlemen of any similar indiscretions that they may have themselves committed. People are always anxious to forget the naughty things they have done. What they like to remember is the naughty things they wanted to do, but didn't dare to.

This diary, therefore, is the truth dressed in a silk chemise. Like most most other writers, I have adopted the morals of the tailor rather than the morals of the gods. For it is the business of the tailor to conceal that which the gods have been careless enough to reveal. The uncensored gods still go about publishing their diaries unexpurgated. They haven't as yet covered the world with a petticoat. The earth still runs over the heavens in her unashamed nakedness, making love to the sun and moon and rain as brazenly as ever. It's time the censors woke up—they should pay some attention to such flagrant breaches of public morality, instead of wasting their thunder on the puny efforts of mere mortals like myself.

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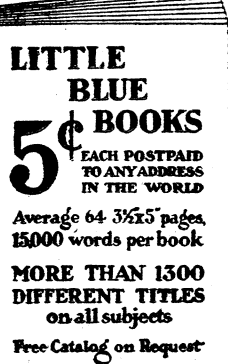
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