

Self-Understanding: First Aid to Free Minds

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

1. Minds and Mirrors

Whether the statement of the old philosopher ("I think, therefore I am") is a bit of the obvious or an arresting epigram merely or a remark deep in truth, it may usefully begin this chapter on freedom, candor, carefulness of the mind in self-analysis. (To be sure Descartes—it was he, I believe—might just as reasonably have said, "I love, I eat, I get tired, I have such and such feelings, I feel hot or cold, sick or well, therefore I am: any one of which would have been an assertion of consciousness which no one but a sheer mystic would think of denying.) Whatever consciousness is, we live by it and we can observe it more or less carefully: call it a matter of nerves, a thing of mechanistic reactions, most sensitive and wide-ranging in man because he has the most highly developed nervous system: nevertheless here we are—conscious actors in a show called life which intensely concerns us, in which we are at once actors and spectators—and our supreme role is that of thinking. In the slang phrase, some persons are "dead from the neck up" or at any rate seem to be far below the possibilities of full mental living: yet to the degree that a man regards life thoughtfully (which does not mean always seriously, certainly not somberly nor heavily), to that same degree he may be said to live.

And here we fall into a para-

dox: Thinking is a very personal thing. It is also—or should be if it is to be reliable—impersonal. First, it is true that each one must closely identify himself with life. He is conscious of the world in relation to himself and *vice versa*. He judges matters as they affect himself first of all. It is, in a word, not a spectacle upon which he looks indifferently: the artist-type or the aloof indifferentist who professes to regard life in a detached way as merely a spectacle is relatively correct in thus naming himself insofar as his attitude contrasts with the common one: but of course he cannot really be indifferent, he has his opinions and feelings about this spectacle into which his own personality enters, he cannot escape from his very own particular consciousness. There is the feeling in the moment of his most complete detachment that it is intimately HE and not another who is absorbed in this business of living. He may have an extraordinary understanding of the emotions of others; he may quite well understand many different viewpoints; he has phases of personality that are found in varying combinations in many of his fellows; and he has, of course, the universal stuff of human nature—yet is he, after all, an individual and he cannot fully enter into another's being.

In the last analysis and in the truest sense, each man lives unto himself, for himself, by his own

light and tendencies. What is life? It is I—my thoughts, feelings, interests, activities. So each man can say to himself. His interests may be narrow or broad; they may range far beyond the more obvious limits of self; nevertheless the note of self is subtle, dominant, all-permeating. One's mind may be likened to a mirror in which is reflected the world and the chief object in that reflection is one's self. This may be said whether one confronts the world arrogantly, seeking to impress himself upon his fellows, or whether he goes timidly through life: whether, to use terms recently made familiar to students of psychology, he is an introvert or an extravert; for egotism (or ego) manifests in a myriad form.

Events large and small, far and near, immediately or remotely concerning us are felt or thought about in personal terms. These feelings may not be unique with us: as, for example, our reactions to the weather, to money, to sex, to work and play, to all the things that commonly engage men's attention; but each man feels them most strongly as they relate to his own consciousness. We have our social impulses; there is the fact of cooperation and sympathy, which not even the most egocentric can quite ignore; some have a broad social philosophy, far above patriotism as provincially manifested, which assures a sentiment of kinship with all humanity—yet the personal equation is always there, unescapable and subtly definitive.

The mind may mirror a poor or a fine image, a magnificent or a petty image, a clear or confused image, an intelligent or an unintelligent—false and distorted—

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picture of the world. Yet we have, always and everywhere, the reflection of life in the mind of an individual. Figuratively we may say that there are mirrors broken and whole, mirrors dull and bright, mirrors which are diligently observed and mirrors which are but carelessly, occasionally glanced at. In terms of thinking about life, that is to say, many are not very active. They are none the less individualistic in their consciousness, egos unreflectively asserting themselves, each having a personality although it may not be very strong nor in a fine or interesting sense original.

To be commonplace is not to be impersonal. The man who is just one of the crowd, dully like the majority of his fellows, is still a special "I." It is indeed the man who rises originally superior in thought to the crowd who is capable of the most impersonal understanding of life yet who, even so, in the vivid or distinctive quality of his thought is most personal—most broadly conscious—in his identification with life. It is such a man who does not deceive himself. He glories in his personality, while at the same time he does not want that personality to be confused nor to be identified in any illusory, false, distorted way with life.

Your average fellow is the one who professes (in most cases self-deceptively, believing himself) to think as a good citizen, or as a patriot, or as a lover of righteousness, or as an upholder of the true gospel and the public welfare. Really his attitude is personal, but he does not know it. His ego is just as active, though on a lower and more confused plane, as that of the independent thinker.

Only, the latter's independence has this double but not contradictory nature: it combines a keen realization of his very own personality, powers and propensities in life with a clear, realistic understanding of life. He feels life very personally, very fully, very intensely; but he does not, for any personal reasons, ignore the facts of life: he seeks neither to escape from himself nor from life but rather to maintain an intimate, harmonious understanding, accepting life frankly and realizing—developing—himself for all that he may be.

When I say that life is personal to each one of us, I do not mean to repeat the timeworn fallacy that "Life is what we make it," nor that cliché of mystical vacuity that "We live in different worlds." Neither statement is true, but they are both misleading and exemplify the very confusion of thought which we should escape by an undeceived, unmythified comprehension of ourselves and of the terms upon which we must really, sensibly live in a world of facts that we may be conscious of personally.

These ideas are our own (the question of originality aside) which we have thoroughly mastered, which we have tested in every possible way before accepting them, which we have compared directly with experience and which we have fitted harmoniously in the general framework of knowledge, which we have made a vital part of ourselves. Yet not too vital—not so vital that it would be like death to give up those ideas. Profoundly as we are convinced, we should always be open to further and changing conviction, not lightly, not irresponsibly, but in accord with new facts which may be brought to light.

We should be independent—of tradition, of custom, of common errors, of subtly emotional or opportunistic influences that confuse thought—but we should not be independent of facts in our thinking. If we are, our thinking is but a poor excuse for the real thing. We are then not thinking—*not seeing—straight.* After all,

out fooling oneself that it is true to life.

Realism is the basis of self-understanding, as it is the only intelligent attitude toward life. Be true to yourself—but first know yourself. See the best in life—but first know life. Here is a world which your senses report to you, which your intelligence can place in orderly, comprehensible relations, and to which you may adapt yourself personally—*which you may feel and know with intense personal consciousness—by at once letting the personal element have its full natural share and letting impersonal thought clearly light your path.*

Let me try to make a little more explicitly this distinction between the personal and the impersonal—a distinction that does not necessarily mean a conflict, although, with one who does not analyze himself and at the same time observe carefully the life about him, there is a conflict. The true personal attitude toward life is that which is finely, firmly rooted in independence of mind and character. A man's ideas, his tastes and desires, his code of behavior should be personally thought out, proved and soundly justified for him. They should be valid for him and this, first and last, is the fundamental test.

There are of course plenty of chances for error. Very good minds, in dealing with this or that question, go astray. The reason is not far to seek: for one thing, they are not well informed; they form opinions upon a very limited view of the facts, without particularly studying the question—or perhaps, led unsuspectingly by a wish to believe, they have studied only one side of the question. And this indicates their second weakness: namely, their letting personal predilections or prejudices determine their opinions, their subordinating of thought to desire. Precisely where they should be clear, impersonal, sharply observant they let themselves be misled by sentiment, by early training, by public opinion, by various weaknesses that make them prefer error to truth (although, naturally, they do not so consciously put it to themselves).

A man must be sure, then, that his opinions are valid for him—that he has really reached them personally by a process of thinking and observing for himself (which of course includes a wide range of intelligent reading). When a man holds to certain notions because they are popular, or because they have the weight of respectability and tradition behind them, or because his self-interest is involved, or because he has readily, credulously accepted the word of others who pretend to speak with authority (without most carefully investigating their claims to authority in the sense of special knowledge), then he cannot be said to have ideas that are really personal to him: he has not thought for himself but has permitted others to tell him what to think. The opinions that most people express are not genuine convictions. It does not follow that these people are insincere; but simply that they have never deeply, thoughtfully, and fully considered these opinions. For all the emotion with which they may defend these opinions, they are nevertheless superficial in their nature, intellectually speaking.

It is only in this attitude that safety lies, only by seeing things for what they are that we can deal correctly with them, only by understanding ourselves in true relation to life (by looking into a clear mirror) that we can avoid the pitfalls of loose thinking and self-deception. The man who is filled with illusions is looking at life through a cloudy and cracked mirror. He is a blind man following blind leaders along a blind trail. If his illusions are purely theoretical—if, in a word, he does not believe them to the extent of letting them determine his conduct in the real business of life—he will escape many bad tumblers: illusions may be pleasant to play with, emotional luxuries so to speak, but they are dangerous unless one realizes them for what they are. One may appreciate a poem, a picture, a sentiment with-

CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra Speaks:

I have decided to publish the following extracts from my diary because I want the world to see me as I see myself. Men have tried to paint me either as a goddess or as a serpent. I am neither of these, but just an ordinary queen with a rather well-developed talent for living. And with the help of the gods, I have tried to use this talent to the best of my ability.

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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they give to actions that are, after all, pretty clear in their nature and not dubious in their consequences. (No—this is not a moral discourse; or, if so, it is positively not in the conventional vein of morality; it is not preaching but simply a commentary, more suggestive than thorough, upon human nature.) And people err on the side of what they call righteousness as much as on the side of what they call wickedness. They have indeed a most jumbled set of notions on behavior and as for sound principles they are notable by their absence in the common judgments that men deliver concerning one another.

Principally this is due, as I have said, to the fact that every man is a special pleader—for himself, for his friends, for the kind of behavior that is agreeable to him or fits his prejudices; and a pleader unfairly against characters and actions which he does not understand, or which he has been taught to condemn dogmatically. And a great deal of this confusion is due to the very old tendency of setting up arbitrary ideas of what man is or should be.

Psychology, or the study of human behavior, was indeed until recently under the sway of religion. It dealt with man's "soul" and with his duty piously considered and with the dogmas of so-called righteousness. And even when divorced from religion, it still tended toward not only a moral attitude but a preconceived, theoretical study of the human mind. It is not until modern times that there has been any general study of the mind as reactive mechanism, of the realistic relation between ideas and actions, of human nature in the concrete rather than in the abstract.

It was also thought that precept, often ornately adorned but seldom enforced in any convincing way, was a pretty safe and forcible guide to behavior: yet so many of those old precepts were, shortly, bunk: either they were false in their definitions of right and wrong or they advised behavior that, however idealistically admirable, was incompatible with the conditions of actual life.

Above all, the old-fashioned psychology, both in its common and its more academic phase, did not teach men to understand themselves by the most realistic process—namely, by keeping an eye upon the facts of their behavior, by checking scientifically the results of their behavior, by singling out their weak and strong tendencies, by looking for the most sound and probable motives, and so on. We can now better understand that facts, facts and more facts are to be gathered if we are to have a worth-while knowledge of behavior. Not glib generalizations about human nature—not moral dicta in the old terms of

virtue and vice—not "looking into the mind" as if it were an original source of truth and conscience regardless of external circumstances—not these are the real aids to self-understanding. What is needed is a realization of the forces that move people to action. If we would know a man, we should not subject him to any arbitrary theory, not measure him by ready-made rules, but observe what he does.

And this of course applies most forcibly or most importantly to the man with whom you are most concerned: yourself. Do you really analyze your behavior? To be sure, you are conscious of what you do—but do you observe it in a sharp, critical, investigative way? Are you curious about the kind of man you are, curious enough to watch yourself in action as you would watch another who intrigued you and by sound induction lead to an understanding of the personality that is You? Do you label your actions (when you choose to label them at all) in a fanciful way or in agreement with specious common rules? Do you really sit down and study the consequences of your behavior and seek to ascertain how far your notions of behavior are confined by the facts of experience? Are you careful how you define actions, seeking for the most accurate name, whether or not it has a pleasing sound? Do you ask yourself how certain ideas of virtue and vice, certain notions of what constitute good and bad influences, work out with regard to copybook rules? Do you look carefully for the motives that lie back of your actions, with the idea not of adorning those actions but of explaining them? Perhaps you do—if you are the one man in a thousand (a generous estimate indeed) who is thus curious and candid about himself.

Well—here again we have an attitude that is rare and yet indubitably sensible. Few men know themselves because few men think rationally, upon the basis of sound observation, about their behavior. To this failure in self-knowledge are, obviously, due so many of the sad blunders that men make in their lives. I do not mean simply episodes of unintelligent behavior, nor bad habits (which may be bad for one man not for another—not "bad" in the sense of "sinful" that is usually implied, but destructive or disruptive) which may be consistent with what is on the whole an intelligently chosen plan of life, but the entire missing of a man's natural bent, the violation of temperament, the forcing of a certain kind of character into false courses.

Many, we know, are living according to ideals of success or respectability or duty—living artificially—who would be far happier if they consulted understandingly their own natures. Instead of

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asking, "What are others doing?" or "What does the world say one should do?" it is better to inquire, "What kind of life will best suit my nature and abilities?" Very few, I believe, give any profoundly personal thought to their careers in life. They fall into these careers by chance. Or they are influenced by others, and no wonder, since they have never counseled deeply with themselves. A great many are drawn by the lure of money-making, splurge, feverish getting and doing, when happiness would be found for them in a simpler path and, too, a better realization of their talents: others, to be sure, could not live the simple life.

Here of course is no question of right or wrong morally. It is but a question of the right man in the right path. After a long period of Puritan repression, we have come to a brighter period of self-expression; and it is important that this self-expression should be intelligent, should truly reflect one's deepest nature and thoughtful desire in life, which is obviously impossible without self-analysis and choice free from the influence of the world's conventional ideals and demands. "They say—let them say" and go your own way, clearly and courageously, unheeding. You have your own life to live and that is quite enough, a job sufficient to keep any one active and with full employment for his wits. But first be sure of what you are, study your own behavior in the light of rationalism, know others (know human nature in the individual and in large) not by rule but by observation, and place yourself in harmony with the facts of life—for although the strong and clear personality may do many things it cannot alter the natural courses of life and death and human nature: it must, in short, while being artistic and vivid in self-realization (while personally getting close to the heart of life) be also scientific in thought. After all, true knowledge begins and ends in the knowledge of one's self: one's self, not in a mystic or anarchic void, but in relation to the irrefragable facts of life.

3. Old Fears and Illusions

There is no finer result of rationalism, illuminated by a wise self-analysis, than the emancipation from old fears and illusions that have been the curse of mankind. Consider fear, and what a ghastly part it has played in the life of man. It has probably been said (or if not, then it now should be said) that the events of history have been largely determined by the element of fear. Man has always been afraid, and of many things. He has been afraid of imaginary gods, demons, mysterious forces of the air. That fear is nothing like what it was a few hundred years ago, yet plainly it is still operative on a considerable scale. When it disappears entirely, religion will be no more with us. And man has been afraid of rulers, charlatans, strangers, foreigners, his neighbors—and himself.

Not all these fears have been or are baseless: even so, what is the best protection against them save a full understanding of them and consequently a knowledge of how to guard against them? Chiefly, however, man's fears—of life and of himself—have been due to ignorance. It is always the unknown that strikes the deepest uneasiness, terror or paralyzing doubt in our minds. We can cope with known things or can reconcile ourselves to them.

Man has been afraid to live fully and to be himself, the obvious explanation being that in the past he did not have the slightest conception of what a full life might be (men as a whole did not) and there were grievous limitations upon self-expression. The majority had to live narrowly and in obedience to the harsh restrictions and dictates of rulers, lords and priests. Such a thing as the dignity and freedom of the human

personality, regardless of rank or wealth, was undreamed of. The ordinary man was no better than a beast in the opinion of those who dwelt elegantly above him (yet sordidly enough upon the fruits of his labor).

As for the natural forces, of which every one has some scientific conception today, they presented terrifying aspects to mankind in pre-scientific times. Where there was no knowledge, fear was as natural as night and day. Men could not escape it. Mentally they were in darkness that held weird and frightful images. And religion, with its dogmatic threats and penalties, greatly increased this fear.

It needs no scholar to tell, in broad outline at least, the remarkable change between medieval and modern times in respect of this old fear, this new possibility of self-expression, this confident light which we now may have upon ourselves and the natural forces in the midst of which we have our being. Science has discovered to us innumerable, tremendous secrets of the natural world, so that we can place ourselves in sensible unity with the laws, so called, of living things. Although it is truly said that psychology has only begun to find itself as a science, yet we know a great deal more on the whole about the workings of the human mind than was formerly known: and, what is more important, we are beginning to take a realistic attitude toward human behavior as the material with which psychology must deal. We can see ourselves, not merely as others see us, but as we really are.

Greatest of all, we can—if we have minds free from the old fears and illusions—see ourselves bravely and fairly in relation to the fundamental, changeless facts of nature. As realists, we have lost the illusions—it is true—but we have also discarded the ancient crippling fears. And those illusions, were they not mainly the product of fear? They were meant to assure man that life was not what it seemed—what it is. And why? Because man looked fearfully upon a life which he did not begin to understand. Those illusions also interfered (as they always must interfere while they last) with the realities of life. The threatened man with punishments which he needlessly feared and promised him rewards in some vague Beyond which foolishly satisfied him for the lack of the actual things he might have in this world.

Did they sometimes bring men happiness or its shadow? Aye, it was but a shadow, and it was moreover the happiness—if one may call it that—of slavery rather than freedom; it was the happiness of weakness, safely clinging to a dark corner, rather than the happiness of freedom venturing forth joyously in the light.

And those old illusions were at the mercy of the first strong wind of reality. Upon them—as upon treacherous shifting sands—was any so-called happiness insecurely based. To have illusions means that one may be disillusioned. And certainly it means that, if one never comes, upon full and clear disillusionment, one will have many bitter moments railing needlessly against the uncomprehended or unaccepted laws of life, feeling oneself painfully mystified in the pull between false beliefs and inexorable reality, thinking of oneself as hanging precariously upon the favor of unknown powers. This cannot be a healthy nor happy state of mind. Even if one has faith that one will be guided by friendly hands in the darkness, how much better it is to move self-confidently, with full understanding, in the light.

Understanding ourselves, we are free within the limits of nature (and of man's knowledge how to control the forces of nature) to be ourselves and even to smile ironically at Time and Chance. When man rises from his knees, he is obviously a taller and a

stronger man and he has a wider range of movement. It is a great deal to have rid oneself of the last illusion and to stand, finally, face to face with life on its own terms. Every man must, anyway, meet the terms of life one way or another and it is better to do so clear-eyed, unafraid, and intelligently taking the best that life has to offer.

"All is vanity, saith the preacher"—but the worst vanities are the very ones with which the preachers have befogged man's vision. The free man has no fears, not because he is sustained by the false and fragile courage of illusions but because he has left fear behind in a solid knowledge and adjustment to life. He is Man as sublimely portrayed in that fine, brave poem by Wilfred Blunt:

LAUGHTER AND DEATH

There is no laughter in the natural world
Of beast or fish or bird, though no
sad doubt
Of their futurity to them unfurled
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling shout.
The lion roars his solemn thunder out
To the sleeping woods. The eagle
screams his cry.
Even the lark must strain a serious throat
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.

IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS

BY ISAAC GOLDBERG

"Defer, Defer, to the Lord High Executioner!"

I have just been chortling through *The Outline of Bunk*, by that Lord High Debunker and Kansan Voltair, Emanuel Halde-man-Julius. It puts one into a congratulatory mood, and so, here goes: First, Congratulations to the Chief himself, for cramming into this man-size and eminently readable account the aims and attitudes of half a lifetime. I remember the early Halde-man-Julius as the same free-ranging spirit that is revealed in these kaleidoscopic chapters. I recall him as a young reporter, who was already free of the romantic notions that fill the head of the gullible cub; I recall him as a Sunday editor, facing a world remade, and somewhat less romantic in his notions than most of the Socialists who read *The New York Call*. He always had a strong appetite for realities and a weak digestion for hokum. *The Outline of Bunk*, then, crowns a career of undaunted free thought.

Second, congratulations to the readers of the Halde-man-Julius Publications. What *The Outline of Bunk* is about I hardly need to tell you. It has been running merrily in these pages for the past few months. In a deeper sense, it has been flowing through the pages of every publication that is sponsored by the great Kansan institution. And now—thirdly—the publishers enter. For The Stratford Company, of Boston, who have issued the book, have performed an admirable job combining attractiveness with serviceability. *The Outline of Bunk* is a large book, but a handy one; it is as easy upon the eye as it is stimulating to the mind.

Its appeal, naturally, will be far greater than that of the Chief's recently published volume on *The First Hundred Million*. The story of the Blue Books is absorbing; it is rather for the interested reader, for the book dealer, than for Mr. Man-in-the-Street. *The Outline of Bunk* hits that same gentleman where he lives. Contemporary civilization is enmeshed in a mad tangle of lies, romantic rubbish, pleasant but false insinuations. Here comes a sword that slashes away to the core of the falsity and leaves healing in its place.

One of the notable phases of Halde-man-Julius' arraignment is this: he denies the fruitfulness of romantic deceit. He recognizes this for the temporizing, essentially cowardly thing it is. He ruthlessly pulls the false whiskers off Santa Claus, not because he loves children the less but because he loves truth the more; and because, moreover, he believes that there is, in truth, a compensating magic and stimulation all its own. In the same way one may be a true patriot—that is, a lover of his country—without being therefore an ass who believes everything that any particular administration announces as the national gospel of the hour. It happens, often, that the real patriot, in his love of his country, considers it his moral duty to fight the powers in the saddle, who are themselves the real traitors.

There is nothing angular or

Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,
Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared foretell
That only man, by some sad mockery,
Should learn to laugh who knows that he must die?

Sad? Well—Mocking? Who then is the mocker? Not any god above nor yet insentient nature. Yet here is an expression of the courage of realism. We know just how brief and unimportant we are as individuals in the universal "scheme." We know that the ancient illusions were but childish dreams that could not outlive knowledge. They were also terrible nightmares and filled the world with fear that was sadly foolish and needless. We know that we must die. What then? Why, then, the ringing call is to live—live intelligently and fully—live by a wise understanding of ourselves and in the process give to ourselves an importance, for ourselves, which nature does not give.

We recall the story of the mystic who said after solemn reflection that he "accepted the universe" and the scientist who commented, "By God, he'd better." So with the free man: he "accepts" the universe, he "accepts" himself, but with understanding—without illusions—and, most happily, without fears.

sour about Halde-man-Julius' debunking. He pricks bubbles and enjoys the collapse. For his own bubbles he prefers the good breath and the sound design of the glass-blower to the insubstantial soap and pipe of the child. Nor does he believe that he is the sole repository of truth. A debunked mind is an open mind. It is hard, but plastic; it is, toward pretense, stony; but it is not petrified. It is positive, but not dogmatic. It has learned to laugh.

A handsome volume of over 500 octavo pages, set in excellent type and priced at \$4. It would be cheap at twice the price. If I had my way, I'd make the book collateral reading in all the high schools and colleges. But I'd insist that the teachers read it first!

More of the Old "Fanny"

Another volume from La Hurst, entitled "Procession" and published by Harper's. It is, as far as I was able to read, the Fannie Hurst of *The Song of Life* and *Manneguin*, and not the Fannie Hurst of *Lumina* and *Appassionata*. This talented lady—for she is that—seems to have a dybbuk in her. You must know what that sort of spirit is, out of Jewish folklore, and made so popular by Ans-kie's play of the same title. It's a possessing spirit that uses your personality as its shell, and while it inhabits you, runs you as it pleases. Only the powers of a miraculous Rabbi can exorcise the demon. Would that some Rabbi would perform the operation for La Hurst. When her dybbuk writes, he—I'll call him that—does the most fearsome stunts. He gets her sentimental, wordy, sensational. He makes her arbitrary, careless, happy-go-lucky. A writer owes it to himself to live up to his best. Miss Hurst doesn't seem to recognize the debt. Her prize-book, *Manneguin*, was one of the most unprizeworthy things I have ever gone through. Her short stories are satevostism at its worst. But here I must pause, or I shall be swearing in the presence of a lady. And that's a thing I never—well, hardly ever—do. If Miss Hurst were a plodding fictioneer, and nothing else, her work could be passed over in silence. But after writing an *Appassionata* she simply has no right to turn out the kind of thing she has been doing. Has success done this to her? Has America done it? Or has she done it to America? These tales—as much as I could manage to read—are just—well, just too bad to be true. Somebody, reviewing *Appassionata*, found fault with Fannie's grammar. My reply was, give us more books like *Appassionata* and keep your grammar for a rainy day. In "Procession" there's a deal of careless syntax; but not all the elegant diction in the world would make of these tales other than the thing they are: soulless sentimentalities. The "highest paid short story writer in the world" is also turning out some of the worst of the short stories. It is inexcusable.

Any way you look at it, this is a BARGAIN! You get the contents of two \$2.65 books for \$1.98; you get a clothbound book (same as \$2.65) and three issues of the Quarterly (regular \$1.50) for \$1.98. All you have to do is sign and mail the blank before Feb. 28, 1929!

Overlooked, But Not Forgotten
I hasten to make up for a number of oversights. Between writ-

ing books yourself and reading the books of others, accounts sometimes get mixed. . . . Here, for example, is something I meant to recommend to you long ago: *Much Loved Books. Best Sellers of All the Ages*, by James O'Donnell Bennett. (Horace Liveright, \$3.50.) The volume is packed with extract, comment and suggestion. If this doesn't arouse in the reader a desire to know authors and books more intimately, then that specific reader is hopeless. But it does more. For those who know universal letters it refreshes memories and restores appetite. An excellent gift-book, moreover, for the whole year round, and well worth presenting first of all to oneself. . . . If you remember Mr. C. J. Bulliet for his *Apples and Madonnas*, a provocative introduction to Modern Art, you will want to know what his \$15 *Venus Castina* is all about. Covicci Friede put it out, in sybaritic style, with illustrations by that up-and-coming artist, Alexander King. King has a style his own, suggestive, shall I say, of a Beardsley with-

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By Upton Sinclair

Upton Sinclair's *OIL!* created a sensation in the book world. Critics hail it unanimously as a great novel. It has been discussed in the press from coast to coast. The story deals with the oil fields in southern California, and through the pages, thinly disguised, stalk figures of well-known senators, oil magnates, labor leaders, financiers, and other personages. *OIL!* was suppressed in Boston in 1927. Yet it has swept the country as few novels of this sort ever have! Originally published at \$2.50, you can now get this book complete, clothbound, with jacket in colors, 527 pages, unexpurgated—word for word the same as the original first edition—for only \$1.98, together with MONEY WRITES! Read below—and use the blank to get this handsome copy of *OIL!* (brown cloth, with dark green lettering).

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out ill health pursuing him and without the 11th Hour Roman Catholic Complex. Bulliet deals with "Famous Female Impersonators Celestial and Human." Too, his subject connotes preoccupation with transvestitism, or, as Ellis lately has named it, Eonism. Behind the wearing of the clothes of one sex by the other is a deal of psychological excitement. Bulliet follows it through the ages. His Dedication is too long, unfortunately, to be quoted, but it is readily to be seen that Bulliet doesn't want This Homosexual World. A rare volume, sometimes written in a hurry, but destined

nevertheless for the de luxe and forbidden shelves. . . . Mr. Matthew Josephson's *Zola and His Time* (Macaulay, \$5) deserves all the praise that it has been getting from the reviewers. Much of Zola, as novelist, may today be moribund; his personality, the problems of the artist and the publicist, are as living as ever, for they symbolize a vital attitude of man toward life. Josephson writes a vivid, onrushing prose, alive to all the implications of the subject. This is more than a resurrection. It is a *vita nuova*, a new life.

It's Safe to "Follow the Crowd" --- But It's So Dull

By E. Haldean-Julius

1. The Uses and Tyranny of Custom

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new, lest one good custom should corrupt the world." That line of Tennyson's implies that a good custom is not to be relied upon but will work mischief if given time. Of course there is the question, which instantly suggests itself, whether the custom is good or—merely custom. What of bad custom? Perhaps change is due not a little to the fact that men discover customs to be not so good as they were thought to be; or conditions, which made certain bad customs inevitable, at length progressively encourage better customs, laying open broader fields for men's intelligence and good will in living; and finally when a good custom dies, why conclude that if it had lived it would have been a corrupting influence?

But then Tennyson was a poet—a poet, too, struggling between the old faiths and the disturbing forces of science and rationalism in the nineteenth century, with one foot in the past and one in the future, if we may use a rather awkward figure of speech (a really trying predicament, too, in which many find themselves). He was right about one thing—the old order changeth. It is on the whole changing for the better now that humanity has at last set its feet firmly on scientific ground—now that civilization has become world-wide, with a solid powerful basis, and with tendencies that assure (not positively but reasonably) a continuous progress—although some very pleasant and not harmful customs may be dropped by the way, forgotten as it were in the rush: dropped as customs, dropped so far as the crowd goes, but retained at will or at least imaginatively appreciated by a

few who do not religiously follow the crowd.

The critic is supposed to be an incorrigibly unreasonable fellow; yet that is because the irritations of his criticisms are so acute and lasting with the average man that the latter forgets the critic's enthusiasms, if ever he noticed them—besides, the average man does not share the critic's enthusiasms. Here let me say that the critic, who in many things does not see eye to eye with the viewpoint of custom—whose ideas of what is "respectable" and "proper" do not agree with the crowd's ideas—is far from damning the influence of custom out of hand. He admits its uses. It is a kind of organization, though not explicitly authorized by law nor deliberately planned by anyone.

No doubt customs dispose of the ordinary contacts of life quite conveniently, so that we need waste the less thought upon them and we can in a measure know what to expect, meeting as it were on familiar ground. Not entirely is this true: for in the simplest points of social intercourse, in details that are apparently trivial, custom may be a rude and hampering influence: it is not subtle and if it is not absolutely inflexible—still it is not so yielding as it might well be. But let us agree, to be perfectly fair and not hypocritical, that custom is, in its sensible uses, a smoothly unifying social force. It is comfortable in many ways, and even the most flaming rebel relies upon it considerably. Imagine a world without it—but you can't. In the free world of the future men will still find custom useful but they will not be slaves to it and they will use it intelligently, tolerantly, and flexibly. The ideal of anarchism is simply that of a world in which there is no law but only custom.

Taken at its best, then, custom is a technique, not perfect perhaps but satisfactory enough, of simplifying and familiarizing so-

finance is an alluring word. Everyone wants to make money. Many are lured into traps: fakes cost the public millions of dollars annually. An authority, Mr. George M. Husser, of the Kansas City (Mo.) Better Business Bureau, has written a special series for The Debunker, entitled "Crooked Financial Schemes Exposed." Send \$1.50 (\$2 Canadian and foreign) for one year's subscription. Address The Debunker, Girard, Kansas.

cial contacts. It places signboards, so to speak, along the ways of daily life so that, in minor things at least, we cannot lose our way; and we come to know these signs so well that we scarcely think about them. Involuntarily we follow the ways of custom, so long as these ways are agreeable, and we save our deliberate thought and action for more vital things or matters in which choice and the factor of personal responsibility are more important. We are indeed grateful for the well-arranged amenities, for custom in its roles of time-saver, introducer, and master of ceremonies.

More largely, the customary ways of doing things in one's social environment (country, state, community, or class) may be defended on the same ground—but here there is a reservation and one cannot wholly agree. Certainly, the traveler in a foreign land feels the usefulness of custom—realizes forcibly how familiar ways, which he has taken for granted, facilitate his living. Also, he is likely to regard these strange customs as foolish, though they serve the same purpose and just as efficiently as the customs in his own country; and the latter, too, seem odd to foreign visitors. But the danger is obvious. Custom erects barriers. It is the prolific breeding ground of suspicion, unfriendliness and all manner of prejudice. The latent ill-feeling among nations and classes breaks into violence only when there is a direct clash of interests; but there is a very bad sort of feeling, a lack of understanding, expressing itself absurdly in snobbery and patriotism and the like, which is constantly felt and which is the evil that custom does with its walls of separatism.

Thus custom is in this way a harsh, tyrannizing force. It is full of snares for the susceptible, unwary emotionalism of men. It darkens and distorts judgment, so that when a man is dealing with the followers of customs different from his own he is not likely to be fair nor scrupulous nor humane. Although he may not express it so baldly, yet he feels that these are not quite to be regarded as fellow humans in the same sense as his own people. He has a great notion of his own superiority and thus custom, flattering him and hiding from him his own faults, wrapping him in that soothing consciousness of doing "the right thing," enslaves him comfortably.

Oh, yes, it is a comfortable sort of slavery. To speak of the tyranny of custom is not to suggest a majority nor even a very extensive sentiment of rebellion against custom. The majority, in fact, are apt to be passionately aroused when anyone asserts that their beloved customs need mending and brushing up. The contented slave is an old, well-known figure. And as for the majority, perhaps their subservience to custom is right enough—right enough for those who are satisfied with it—except for the harmful social consequences of this attitude.

For tyranny, any kind of slavery, does not affect the contented slave only. It is most grievously a burden to the man who has the desire of freedom. It injuriously reacts also upon those who enforce it, warping their character and judgments, standing in the way of their own development as human beings, free from both mastery and slavery. True, there are many with a strong spirit of freedom, sufficient unto themselves, able to break the fetters of custom. These are the superior persons. They know that there is a good deal of freedom, spite of all laws and customs and obstacles of any kind, for the man who dares claim it.

The tyranny of custom, after all, is chiefly enforced by means of that dubious prize called reputation, to be granted or withheld according as one follows the crowd or renders himself conspicuous by standing apart, a figure of differentiation and therefore, the crowd feels (not altogether wrongly), of

rebuks or criticism. Now, ostracism or public ill repute in one degree or another, in one shape or another, does not frighten the man with a strong individuality as it does the timid man. The man who serenely holds to values of his own which contrast considerably with those of the crowd is not so sensitive to the breath of censorious opinion as the man who, having no values that he really may call his own, depends upon custom for his whole rule of life: the latter must follow the crowd or be entirely lost: not so with the former, who knows quite well the way he would go, who reckons not of the commonplace condemnations of his fellows, and who cares only or largely for good opinion of a minority who have sympathetic way and tastes.

We all want the good opinion of some one, but we don't all place such importance upon the estimate of the larger crowd of society: it is the esteem of kindred spirits, be they ever so few, that we crave. And there are individuals who, if need be, are quite capable of standing utterly alone. They do not require social approval. The plaudits of the multitude are, in fact, obnoxious to them. They live in a world intellectually their own and it is a bravely, brilliantly peopled world too.

There are many, however, who have an uneasy feeling under the domination of custom but who have not the strength to set up, as it were, a separate life. Freedom calls to them but in too faint a voice. Not every man who bows to the tyranny of the crowd and of the common ways is happy or true to himself in his submission. Well—such men are fated to chafe but still wear their chains. Occasionally they may show a little spirit and dare for a moment to step aside from the beaten path. And they may in the secrecy of their minds enjoy a carefully guarded if tiny flame of rebellion. They play the hypocrite (for which we may pity rather than blame them) and guide their conduct meticulously by the rule of the neighbors and all the while preferring an opposite course. They are sensitive to the many-tongued censure of the community and after all they have a certain respect—or, more precisely, fear—for the main body of that public opinion which in detail they may rate poorly.

For the free man, no such course is thinkable. Nor is it so much that he has courage to defy the opinion of the neighbors, of the community, of society and the tyranny of custom. The truth is that he feels only contempt or amusement; if he is right with himself, he cares not what others think; snobbery is a poor, pitiable joke to him and the technique of ostracism a subject for curious study perhaps but not the frightful thing it appears to be in the minds of the more timid.

And why should the judgments of those with whose standards of thought and behavior you disagree have great weight? I am not now speaking of that kind of ostracism, persecution, discrimination which actually injures the heretic in his person, in his liberty or in his means of livelihood: that is obviously a far more serious affair and requires various tactics of self-defense. But there are many who, knowing better, are cowed by the mere opinions that prevail "respectably" and forcibly in their social environment. They are afraid, not of anything the neighbors may do, but of what the neighbors may say. One is tempted to say that such persons are deficient in self-respect. They have not that sureness and integrity of personality which would make their own approval quite sufficient in the face of all the world.

Very different is the attitude of the free man. And it is the proof of the perfectly free character as well as the free mind that it is not trammelled by precept, example or custom however the most impressive to the average man. To be free is to live one's own life. As nearly as pos-

sible, you may say—but that is granted as a matter of course. Freedom within social limitations is what I mean, and such limitations as are necessary and unavoidable will not unduly irk the free man: certainly he is intelligent enough to live his own life—to be free in the fullest intelligible sense of the word—without smashing the social structure or trampling upon the rights of any man. If others are scandalized by his attitude, that is quite another matter: let their tongues foolishly clack; let them wonder or gab as they will at this strange phenomenon, this apparition of oddity, this person of apparent eccentricities (did you ever hear a good Christian express naive amazement that So-and-So "actually doesn't believe in God"?)

The free man not only believes as reason rather than authority or popularity dictates, but he indulges his own private tastes, follows his own cherished paths of entertainment and curiosity, orders his life in large and in apparently small things as best accords with his predilections, however peculiar they may appear to everyone else but himself and, in short, is free of the tyranny of custom, falling in with it in the most natural way when he recognizes it as a convenience. He is grateful enough for the agreeable uses of custom. He refuses, however, to let it become a formidable or sacred influence, condemning him to a commonplace conformity.

Yet he does not go about thrusting his own ways, his own views, unmannerly upon other people. He doesn't stoop to the childish motive of shocking others for the sake of shocking nor does he need to be freakish in order to be free. He realizes, even so, that the freak—if that term is really a fair one, which perhaps it is not—has a right to his so-called freakishness and that it may, after all, have more significance for the latter than would appear to an unsympathetic eye. (And perhaps he may add that nothing could be more freakish than certain fashions of the crowd, taken up suddenly and as soon dropped, which everyone ridiculously apes.)

Again, "respectability" in its ordinary petty connotations holds neither awe nor charm for the free man. It is amusing, at times pathetic, to see people trying so hard to be "respectable" and fearing that by some slight gesture, word or misstep they may be suspected by somebody of "not being respectable" means, in short, to obey strictly (in outward seeming at least) the conventional inhibitions, commandments, rules, fashions: it is a compound of snobbery, Puritanism and mediocrity—above all, it is conformity: it is to have, we may say, no private conscience nor intellectual-moral criteria of one's own but to refer every question of what is right and proper to that public opinion which, naturally, makes no fine distinctions and is lacking in breadth and sensitiveness of outlook.

And "respectability" in its manifestations that are usually called to our attention, is not, after all, worthy of respect. A fine sense of honor, kindness, broad-mindedness, strength with freedom of character—these qualities most entitled to respect may be absent from the makeup of "respectability." Most of all we respect the man who has the intelligence to bring some distinctive, vital, and attractive meaning into his own life. We respect, that is to say, the man who is free.

The men who most inspire us in history are those who struck blows for freedom—intellectual, political or social. They were men who stood superior to the common views. They were not "respectable." They were not slaves of custom. They would have none of the petty, custom-marked ideals of success. Who better to emulate? To be sure, the free man does not think of "copying" anyone: yet in the heroes of freedom he naturally finds inspiration and a spirit to which his own spirit leapingly responds.

Finally, let me remark that the tyranny of custom is not absolute. There is a great deal of freedom possible in this world if one is intelligent and resolute enough to take it. There are plenty of examples of men who, quite easily and simply, pursue individual courses in life and who are free from the hesitations, the half-measures and the timid concerns that circumscribe most men. Perhaps the average man has as much freedom as he wants: others may find an outlet for their discontent, may move more freely,

if they resolve strongly upon standards of their own.

2. The Eternal Stranger

The man doesn't conform—he is the eternal stranger who, in all periods and societies, has been regarded suspiciously by the majority. He seems rather a sinister figure. Shall we say that other men are somewhat afraid of him? that they feel uneasy in his presence. If not, why should they have such a strong feeling against him? Why not ignore him? Yet he is a marked man. It is felt that he isn't safe. And for this feeling there is of course a sound justification.

This stranger, this non-conformist, this free man going his own way may not be a dangerous rebel or heretic; he may not actively be an "enemy of society"; he may not be an agitator or a propagandist, may not care to change anything so long as his own liberty is not curtailed, may be content to remain a quiet, aloof individualist; yet potentially he is a disturbing fellow—let us grant that frankly—and is in the common view ripe for "treason, stratagems and spoils."

The trouble is that no one can tell just what this odd, intriguing, disquieting stranger may do. He is an unknown quantity, albeit the average man has plenty of pat, uncomplimentary names for him. But while it is easy enough to call him a "crank" or to say that he is simply "contrary" or explain by one of the many naive formulas just what ails the man, there is something unsatisfactory about this attitude. He remains an object of wonder—a sore puzzle—an irritant to the body social.

Of course, however quietly he pursues his way he is nevertheless a living criticism of the customs which he rejects. True, he may be the very soul of toleration. He may waive any question of comparison, referring to his uncommon way as simply a matter of taste, saying that each man's way is good enough if it is suitable to him—in short, he may not claim to have a better way of life but *his own way*. Even so, the crowd feels that there is a criticism implied in the mere fact of difference. Here is a man (and although they may call him a fool, they do not really believe that he is a fool) who, with custom making the path of life prearranged and smooth for him showing him the line of least resistance, deliberately chooses to go off "on a tangent," as it is said, of his own. He has sat in judgment and decided that the good old familiar customs are not good for him—in other words, he is a critic whether he has said a word or not. "Actions," to quote the old proverb, "speak louder than words."

And it is true that in the large decisions upon which character rests the free man is, by his very being, a critic of his lesser fellows. He has taken higher ground. He has displayed exceptional intelli-

gence and that is pretty sure to be resented. The average man may be confident that he is perfectly right, that he is doing the only proper thing, and that he knows all that needs to be known by him—yet he resents the suggestion, whether in words or attitude, that another man excels him in discrimination or resolution.

The intense dislike of the crowd for the eternally strange free man is, from one point of view, a gesture of weakness that seems incompatible with the strength of those making it. It would seem that the customs of society are strongly enough entrenched so that any departure from them would be a matter of interest, perhaps, but not of indignation. The crowd being so much stronger than the rare non-conforming individual, one wonders why it betrays such excessive, excited emotion. We have been led to believe that victory, that strength, gives serenity—but that maybe is a sentimentalized belief. Certainly, the crowd is not serene although it has more powerful numbers. It behaves toward the stranger as if he were really about to conquer it, to rob it of something, to change familiar things which therefore stand in need of passionate defense. It is curious and most worthy of reflection how one man or a small number of men can, by expressing strange ideas and ways, upset the feeling of the crowd and throw it, at times, to paroxysms of fright or rage. In pure theory one might argue that the average man, safely and solidly identified with the strong crowd, knowing that he belongs with the majority, would be tolerant toward or at least only amused by the stranger who stands aside in lonely contrast. On the contrary, the fact is that the greatest passion is that displayed by the crowd when it spies a non-conformist: then it acts ridiculously, lashing its great strength to desperate intolerance.

There is here a failing in gratitude which, to be sure, is first of all a lack of perception. Yes, the crowd should be grateful to the eternal stranger who will not conform. He makes the spectacle of life so much more interesting. Even the average man, one might think, would welcome this non-conformity as a sort of harmless and intriguing variation from the commonplace. Think how dull life would be if there were no man strikingly unique in thought and deed! We are told that "variety is the spice of life," but variety too much be supplied according to the customs so that it is held close within the commonplace round.

Just suppose (to cite an eminent representative of the commonplace) there were no one in the world who would possibly do, think or appear strange in comparison with Mr. Coolidge! Suppose we had a world of Coolidges! That would be worse than dull: it

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would positively be horrible, and that word, I swear, is well-chosen.

Even the dull of this earth would be dissatisfied with universal dullness. As it is, they have the strangers to intrigue and excite them, but they are not a bit grateful. They denounce meanly, jealously, fearlessly—they would, if they could, destroy the breed—yet this latter appears impossible.

We have good historical as well as contemporary evidence that they are irrepressible, these strangers we have always with us. And what a flat record, by the way, would history be without them! They furnish the poetry and the drama of history. They lend to history the thrilling, personal touch of bigotry—for without exceptional men, men who (even though winning for a time the plaudits of the crowd) were above the crowd, what biography could there be worthy of the name? I should not say that the life-story of a quite ordinary person would be worthless, but it would surely not be very lively nor fascinating. Not only the eminent, skilled leaders of the crowd (often using the sentiments of the crowd to serve ends which the crowd could not see)—such leaders as really were extraordinary persons and not mere commonplace "heroes" and successful men—but still more the strange, solitary figures whom we shall never quite understand, the men most decidedly and oddly in contrast with the common types, make history worth reading. Vividly they stand out in dull surroundings. They are colorful, whether in their virtues or in their vices. Their infinite variety is beyond the dragging, stifling power of custom. Let there be the same, dull ways for those who require them; but as an antidote for dullness we need the example of the eternal stranger.

Yet it is true that this stranger is not appreciated save by one who resembles him, by one who is himself not thoroughly at home in conventional surroundings. We cannot expect the average man to realize how valuable is this exception to the rule. In a way we can even sympathize with the average man. The plain fact is that he does not know "where he is" when dealing with the stranger. His ordinary fellows he can judge by himself and fully count upon their behaving in like manner. He is embarrassed, however, when he faces the eternal stranger. It is not likely that the latter will say or do anything so very startling, certainly nothing dangerous, judged by any reasonable standards. He is really a decent, human, companionable fellow. Yet there is a mysterious, provoking air about him—he is holding something back—who knows whether he is "loaded" and will explode at any minute?

Indeed, by merely saying nothing the stranger can create an impression of secret, upsetting things. Take him any way one will, he is not the figure one looks for in an ordinary crowd, and when he finds himself—as now and then he does—in such a crowd, there is a situation. Silence itself, of course, is unconventional in a sociable gathering. To be "regular" one must chatter meaninglessly with the rest. And in the least remark of the stranger, there is apt to be sounded a note of difference—a suspicious inflection, maybe—an odd turn of phrase—an unexpected glimpse even of a commonplace subject. Whatever gracious diplomacy he may command in such a crisis, the general feeling is that he cannot be trusted. Is it not known that he is a man of obscure and ominous heresies? Is he not a person who is known to behave according to secret formulas of his own? Is he not a skeptic, a cynic, a radical, or what-not? His mild manners, his engaging airs, may be deceptive—who knows when he will intrude with his terrible views or do something that will quite take one's breath away?

Yet the truth is that the heretical stranger is, in ordinary intercourse, the most considerate of men. He makes no foolish attempts to expound his view of life to those who could not possibly comprehend it. He understands them better than they understand him. The toleration is far more on his side because in the intelligence which produces a tolerant attitude he has decidedly the advantage. It is rather the upholder of common notions who, in the pride and intolerance of his solidly "respectable" position, is likely to be persistent in thrusting his views upon the stranger whom, if he is very naive he wants to convert and whom, at any rate, he wants volubly to condemn.

The stranger, as I say, has the advantage of a clearer, more tolerant understanding. He has also the advantage of a sense of humor. He can enjoy smilingly the antics of the crowd. He can see and appreciate custom in its phases of comedy. This "respectability," he may meditate, is in its way a delightful show; and while he does not choose to engage in it as an actor bound by the conventions of this crowd-managed theater, he is well entertained as a spectator. He has other moods, of course. He is sometimes indignant at the cruelty or depressed by the stupidity of the crowd. Being a sensitive person, he observes many things which affect him most unpleasantly. No one is so unfeeling that he can continually smile at life, desirable as this attitude is: sometimes he is saddened: at times he is disgusted; again he is angered, though not to folly or violence: and, having an ever-

lively sense of skepticism and wonder, he is of course perplexed. Yet withal his sense of humor remains true and keen.

The crowd, for all its ridicule, cannot take a genuinely humorous—or good-humored—attitude toward the stranger. If a majority were capable of a sense of humor about such things, what a different tale would history be! But its ridicule is not effective, as ridicule is supposed to be, because it is obviously lacking in humor and has a rasping note of indignation; in attempting to heap ridicule upon the eternal stranger who refuses to be tamely in and of it, the crowd only exposes itself to ridicule.

A fact which should not be overlooked is that the native stranger is the most objectionable. A man coming from a far country, let us say, is in the opinion of the average person naturally odd and could not be otherwise. He has not been given the inestimable privilege, light and leading of long familiarity with "our" customs, which of course are the only good ones. It does not follow that he is to escape censure—far from it. It is necessary to show him his place. Although he is not to blame for it, still his differences constitute a challenge which we cannot ignore. Strangers of all kinds will bear watching and perhaps a few manly slaps and digs. Yet the stranger who is not of the genuine type but has been transplanted from a foreign environment is not hopeless. Given time, he may see the wisdom of conformity in his new surroundings. We reflect that in his own country he may not be a stranger. He is, so to speak, a stranger by accident rather than by temperament or—shall we add?—perversity.

No similar charity can extend to the native stranger. His queerness, his heresy, his withdrawal from the crowd is inexcusable. Why, has he not grown up among us, trained in the righteousness of our ways, counseled with our common wisdom, and should he not therefore know better? He fouls his own nest, or bites the hand that feeds him, or betrays his own household to the enemy, or something equally shameful and terrible. So the man who is a stranger in his own country must be, in the secret impurities of his blood, a very stranger indeed!

3. Paths of Discovery

Strangers—yet these strangers, these non-conformists, these men who live freely, who wander at will away from the straight level road of custom, have the thrill which comes from striking out into paths of discovery. It is not simply the chance of learning new things which goes with an inquiring disposition. It is more subtle than definite knowledge; although the man who through widely inquisitive and free reading and a broad culture both human and literary marks himself as different from the average is abundantly rewarded for his pains; culture indeed is a rich treasure house into which few can enter without abandoning the spirit of conformity. When men read much, inquire, examine, and explore odd corners which their fellows generally pass by without a glance—then they are strangers to the crowd.

Nor in celebrating this quest which lies outside the beaten tracks and the narrow restrictions of custom need one rely wholly upon the fact that the great discoveries of human progress—new truth, beauty and usefulness—have been made by just such strangers. That, of course, is true and very important. Had custom completely ruled the world, had there been no one to break away from custom, there would have been no progress. We should not have the benefits nor the glories (nor the follies) nor yet the endless possibilities that belong to civilization. All great thinkers, artists have been, each in his way, adventurers beyond the metes and bounds of custom. They have been genuinely of the breed of the eternal stranger. We have granted the usefulness, within certain limits, of custom: but who shall deny that these men who have broken away from custom have been more splendidly useful?

Yet there are many paths of discovery, many opportunities for delightful exploration in this life of ours, which we can enjoy if we do not jog along in a rut as the blind thralls of custom. We can all make our personal lives more significant, but not if we follow the crowd imitatively, not if we resign ourselves tamely to the conventions, not if we prefer "respectability" to adventure—mean-

ing adventure of the mind, of the personality, of life incessantly curious and free and zestful.

True, many—even many who have longings for something different—find it more comfortable to conform, safer to keep step with the crowd, less arduous to accept the ready-made formulas than to discover a meaning in life for themselves. And we do not deny that custom is a pretty soft, simple, comfortable thing—for those who like it—while it may be very irksome to those who have strange elements in their nature, which custom does not satisfy. It is safe to follow the crowd, indeed we have been proverbially counseled that there is safety in numbers—but how dull this is to anyone who has a glimpse of the free ways that lie beyond the range of the crowd's vision.

Does one risk something for freedom? Nothing is more worth while. And the risk depends upon how strong one is. Every man must of course decide for himself whether he is able to find a support in the sure integrity of his individual life, aside from the support of custom upon which men

usually rest. If he is afraid of ridicule, misunderstanding, gossip and the like—then he would better take the safe way and identify himself with the crowd. That, one might say, is where such a man belongs. Plainly, he has the psychology of the crowd—he is largely under the influence of custom—he has the paste of "respectability" in his system, or he would be unhesitatingly forthright and free.

It can be said, however, for the free man that he feels no loss of safety in departing from the ways of the crowd. On the contrary, what he cannot endure is the tyranny of custom, although he makes sensible terms with it, using it for what it is worth and ignoring it when it would interfere vitally with his life. There are no penalties for being a stranger, for being a free man, save those which strength of character and intelligence render harmless. Freedom is an attitude, and he who holds that attitude clearly can have no qualms nor regrets. And why should ostracism worry the free man when, in effect, he ostracizes himself?

The Moving Finger Writes

By Lloyd E. Smith

Apologia

Once upon a time—in the *Saturday Evening Post*, I believe, though it does not matter—there was published a story entitled "The Ledger of Life." The ledger of life with which the story dealt was the United States mails. Very pretty and somewhat sentimental though this metaphor is, it is nevertheless expressive of the fact that the mails do contain a documentary record, though fragmentary, of human life. The contents of any mailbag would reveal much of the pathos as well as plenty of the comedy of life.

The contents of the mailbags that come to the Haldeman-Julius Publications display this relation to life. Not only orders for books and magazines, but all kinds of inquiries, comments, arguments, objections, commendations and condemnations. Many of these, we know, would be interesting to other readers if they could be placed before them. Many queries, if answered publicly, would clear up doubts in other people's minds. For Haldeman-Julius readers are not obscured with the anonymity which hides the purchasers in a store. And they have, besides, a common basis of understanding; any two Little Blue Book readers can get together, for example, and immediately find common ground on which to stand.

Hence, this department in the *Weekly*. It will contain whatever the readers make it contain. It will be as interesting—as vital—as as newsworthy—as provocative—as it is possible to make it.

And so, after the manner of Clarence Darrow, the title for this department has been borrowed from that ever-fertile source of quotations, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (complete in Little Blue Book No. 1). The complete stanza reads:

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

Which is suggestive of the poem's constant note of materialism and agnosticism, which is assuredly not out of place in this paper. And the Little Blue Book, by the way, contains Clarence Darrow's essay "A Persian Pearl," discussing the *Rubaiyat*—for the poem is undoubtedly Mr. Darrow's favorite.

And, by the way, while I think of it, do not address any correspondence to me personally. All letters, inquiries, or whatever, should be addressed simply to Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kans. All mail is intelligently sorted and handled efficiently. The only way to assure your letter of receiving proper attention is to address it to the company.

Author of "The Key to Culture" Visits Girard

Joseph McCabe, who has just completed the 40-volume summary of all knowledge known as *The Key to Culture*, made a flying visit to Girard. Flying, that is, in that he was no sooner here than it was told about that he was to leave on almost the next train. For he must be in Chicago for a series of lectures, then down to Omaha, then back to Chicago—and back in London, England, by February 17. The man is never still.

(At that, he remained here two days.)

Though he was expected in Girard, he arrived without ostentation. Somehow he was missed at the station—a delay about his bags, or something like that. But he had been in Girard before—three years ago—and he knew his way about, as he knows his way about in countless cities and villages all over the world. So he walked casually westward until he came to the Haldeman-Julius Company's plant—when he was promptly spied through the large north windows and Mr. Haldeman-Julius rushed for the door, to give Mr. McCabe a cordial welcome.

Most amazing of all is Mr. McCabe's ever-present youth. Without exaggeration, he looked younger and spryer than when he was here in November, 1925. Sparse though he is, he is physically a dynamo of nervous energy. There is a suggestion of great reserve power, a hint of holding back forces which, if let loose, would—well, he is letting them loose, as his achievements and his future schedule amply show.

The Key to Culture has been completed—all 40 volumes are now in print. The next job Mr. McCabe is to do—in fact, he is now at work on it—is *The Key to Love and Sea* in eight volumes. This will be a set separate in itself, with a special cover in colors. When ready, the set will be sold as a complete unit, in eight volumes. It is not yet ready to go out to the public, however; watch for announcements in the next few months.

But this will not be all. Joseph McCabe has signed up for three years of work, exclusively for the Haldeman-Julius Publications. This word "exclusive" is no mere item of press talk, either. Mr. McCabe says, in a recent letter, that he is even canceling all work for British publishers or other interests.

In the next three years Mr. McCabe will prepare, among other things, two 12-volume works. One is to be *The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church*. This will be the only work of its kind ever published. In the words of McCabe himself: "This is to be the only complete manual with references to both original authorities and more convenient sources, a work from which one can settle all Romanist controversy. I shall write it so that Protestants can use it." Here, in short, will be the fallacies of the Roman Catholic Church exposed from their own records, and their arguments refuted out of their own mouths!

The second 12-volume series will be *The Story of Human Morals*. Mr. McCabe describes this work as follows: "It will be also the only work of its kind. Where it may seem to overlap previous works the meaning is that the abstract statements of earlier works will now be replaced by concrete pictures of life. It will settle all controversies about, pagan and Christian morals, etc."

And you may depend upon the continuance of Mr. McCabe's fascinating literary style, with constant suspense and a delightful sense of the picturesque. Watch for announcements of these new series.

A Secret

Only a part of the work that McCabe is to do has been an-

nounced. You have heard of *The Key to Love and Sea*, *The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church*, *The Story of Human Morals*—these three series. You know his fifty or so Little Blue Books already in print. You know about the 40-volume series called *The Key to Culture* already completed. But there are other series planned—at least two—to be announced later. And then there is a secret.

The secret concerns Joseph McCabe and the new *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*. The new *Weekly* will probably have a new name—if the Editor finds a suitable one in the thousands submitted in the recent prize contest. The paper will be changed in several ways. And one of the things to watch for in the new *Weekly* will be something to do with Joseph McCabe—something entirely different from anything so far announced or mentioned anywhere in connection with Mr. McCabe's work!

We are going to keep this a secret for a little while. But it is too good to keep very long. Meanwhile, you'd better make sure your subscription is in good standing—paid up, and all that—so that you won't miss it when it comes. It will be worth all that the new *Weekly* will cost for a year—and there is talk of increasing the price. Subscribers who are paid up when the change is made, however, will have their subscriptions completed with the new paper, just as though there was no change in the rate.

Shop Talk

Marcel Haldeman-Julius introduces her new St. Bernard puppy, by name Ajax Simba, to her readers in the April *Debunker*. There are pictures of several Haldeman-Julius dogs. All dog lovers—and all enthusiastic followers of the writings of Mrs. H.-J.—will be looking eagerly forward to this characteristic article.

Ever since the appearance of E. Haldeman-Julius' inside story of his nine years of publishing and selling 100,000,000 Little Blue Books (*The First Hundred Million*), letters and telegrams have been coming into Girard querying "What is the best seller for 1928?" or "What book does such and such a town buy the most of?" or "Give us the latest data on Little Blue Books." If this keeps up we will have to post daily bulletins on the sales of these 5-cent books: Interest in jokes picked up in Reindeer, Ore., last week; or, Love suffered a slight relapse in the interest of North Dakota readers during the month of December, etc. All jesting aside, this book continues to be the most sensational contribution ever made to the diagnosis of the American reading public.

The large illustrated Little Blue Book catalog is being revised and

brought up to date for 1929. Several new classifications of titles will be made. All new titles will be listed and classified; the index to authors will be revised, and an index by subjects may be added. By the way, how much do Little Blue Book readers use these indexes? If you want the Authors' Index to Little Blue Books continued, please drop us a card to that effect. Does it help you to find Little Blue Books you want? Is it worth devoting 22 pages of the catalog to this Index and the Numerical List? Would you welcome an alphabetical index to the series by subjects? After all, Little Blue Book readers are those who benefit most from such reference lists. (Simply address your cards or letters to Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kans.)

The Jubilee Souvenir Number of the *Debunker* has gone to press, containing the names and addresses of 1,000 *Debunker* subscribers who sent in one or more new subscriptions during the Jubilee Campaign. Don't ask for a copy of this number. Only those listed in the "Who's Who in Debunked America"—those 1,000 friends who helped to increase the *Debunker's* circle of readers—get this book. It is not for sale. Only enough are printed for these 1,000 people. The type is being "killed" as each form comes off the press.

A lady bookseller in Chicago does not like Mr. Haldeman-Julius' *Outline of Bunk*—even sight unseen. She wrote to the Boston publishers as follows: "Because in the *Outline of Bunk* you admire Bernard Shaw, Anatole France, and H. G. Wells, I wouldn't have the book as a gift, and I wouldn't sell it to anyone, not if I were offered five million dollars for a single copy!" Hmm. Wonder if she would take \$6,000,000?

The 1929 World Almanac, now out, and obtainable (we suppose) in all bookstores, at all newsstands, etc., contains six consecutive pages devoted to the Little Blue Books. This is the largest single advertisement in the book.

Kroch's Book Store, 206 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, has stocked many hundred sets of the 60-volume High School Educational Course so extensively advertised by Haldeman-Julius Publications right now. Chicago readers can buy this set at the advertised price (\$2.98!) at Kroch's. By the way, how would Chicago readers like to have Mr. Kroch put in a complete department, carrying all the Little Blue Books constantly in stock? Any Chicago reader so wishing might drop into Kroch's, and mention to Mr. A. Kroch, the proprietor, that he thinks it is a good idea.

An Outline of Human Progress From a Debunker's Viewpoint

OUTLINES of various kinds have appeared, but E. Haldeman-Julius is the first to provide an Outline of Bunk. He is the first and the only writer to survey the entire history of man—all the activities of the human race—from a candid point of view which denounces bunk from beginning of recorded history until today. E. Haldeman-Julius, in his role of debunker extraordinary, is beyond a doubt the one person writing today who could have procured such a book as this Outline of Bunk—and he has written it, with a gusto which will invigorate and delight his readers, and all those who become his readers because of a deep-seated conviction that any war on bunk is a fight worth supporting.

The Outline of Bunk is something new in the field of popular surveys of the spectacle of man multiplying, living and dying on this little earth we call ours. It is a huge clothbound book of some 600 pages—142,000 words—which takes a vantage point such that the chronicle of mankind can be related with emphasis on the salient pieces of bunk which have made the story fraught with folly, falsehood, and failure. E. Haldeman-Julius is thoroughly frank. He makes no truce with any group or class. Whether it is bunk in politics, religion, sex or whatever—he calls it by the only name it deserves and relegates it to the scrap-heap in his searching analysis for what is worth keeping and worth perpetuating in the long tale of man's rise to power on the earth.

Menumental is an adjective which fittingly describes this work. It is the culmination of E. Haldeman-Julius' career as an outspoken, straight-from-the-shoulder debunker. That he has long had such a work in mind there can now be no doubt, for the scope of this book is the result of long deliberation. The book stands out by its all-inclusiveness, its penetrating delving into the past for the roots, the origins, the ultimate vicious and pernicious sources of bunk in all its guises. For bunk has long been in the world under various names. Bunk has been hidden in many a poisonous pellet coated with a layer of sweet-tasting and outwardly harmless sugar. Even to those who have for a long time flattered themselves that they are debunkers, many of the more insidious and subtle forms of bunk may never have appeared as such.

The Outline of Bunk is a worthy epitome of E. Haldeman-Julius' own philosophy, which has matured and ripened into a confirmed hostility to all forms and varieties of bunk, but which includes as well a sincere appreciation of the beautiful, the meritorious, the admirable, as judged by the standards of a twentieth-century civilized citizen of the world. To all those who have so often belittled him for always crying, "Down with bunk!"—and, supposedly, denouncing him for tearing down without ever building up—E. Haldeman-Julius offers this book. Here, within the covers of one large volume, is the answer to any criticism of this kind. For it will be found that the second part of this imposing work has for its keynote, "Up with all that is truly worth while!"

ORDER BLANK FOR "THE OUTLINE OF BUNK"

Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas

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By E. and M. Haldeman-Julius

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