

Unchecked Impressions and Hearsay Are Found in Popular Errors

By E. Haldeman-Julius

1. Every Man Has His Opinion

A scientist has written that popular beliefs are almost sure to be wrong because they are based upon insufficient evidence—too narrow a range of observation—too small a number of instances. The average man is impressionistic. He sees in half-glances. He jumps to conclusions. It is not easy for him to concentrate intellectually nor does he see the reason for painstaking thought and investigation in arriving at opinions. He is not curious, he is not zealous for the truth, and it needs very little material for him to form an opinion satisfactory to himself on almost any question.

And every man, it seems, must have his opinion. It matters not how poorly capable he is, from knowledge and really serious, extensive attention to a subject, in having an opinion. He may have very little to go on, but on that little he will go far. The average man will announce, with every show of confidence, positive views on subjects which the student approaches tentatively. If it is a dispute involving science, he will be more positive than the scientists. Psychology is an open book to him, although specialists in the study of the human mind and behavior may have their doubts and

disagreements. Politically, the average man is sure of himself; a certain party, certain principles, certain politicians are right and that is simply, sufficiently that. Strange views of history—picked up somewhere, anywhere—will be given out by a man who has never spent as much as a solid hour of reading in history and who perhaps has never met anyone who knows enough reliable history to fill a page.

You will say it is an exaggerated statement that the average man has an opinion on every subject. And to be sure, there are subjects that he has not heard of. There are, again, subjects that do not interest him. But if he is even slightly aware of a subject and even slightly interested in it, his interest will be likely to carry him—not far enough to study it, but far enough to form an opinion about it. He can form an opinion with remarkable celerity. In many cases, the process is simplicity itself: he has only to glance at his stock of prejudices, and then express an opinion which agrees with those prejudices. An unfamiliar, upsetting opinion which does not fit his creed for such cases made and provided is dismissed airily or indignantly as sheer heresy.

Opinions are easily acquired: a word, an assertion, a straw of

seeming evidence is sufficient to the unwise. Ask the next fellow you meet for his opinion on the condition of Europe today, or the influence of Christianity upon history, or the differences between men and women, or religion as a moral force, or what is wrong with the world, or whether literary censorship is desirable, or immortality, or evolution, or anything—and you will be obliged promptly with an opinion. Few men indeed can resist the flattery implied in soliciting their opinions. They feel a pride and no less a duty in the matter. They will speak, and not uncertainly.

We live in a democracy and we believe, sometimes more and at other times less, in free speech; so every man can have his opinion, every man can express his opinion volubly, without let or hindrance. It may seem a poor thing to others, but it is his own and therefore cherished by him as a thing of personal value and unimpeachable substance. Yet occasionally the man of philosophic reflection might wonder if it would not be well for nine-tenths of the opinions never to be heard. It suggests an interesting speculation: what the condition of society and culture might be if there were no opinions expressed save as the outcome of diligent, careful consideration. Say that no man would venture to have an opinion on a subject without at least, roughly, a fifty percent knowledge of that subject; or say that no man would have an opinion without the support of at least—let us be easy—four hours' definite thinking and research. Or suppose men were to be always

quite frank. "I know nothing whatever about the subject." "I have given that question very little thought." "I haven't enough facts to justify an opinion." "This is only my opinion, and I really don't know whence nor why." If honest confessions of this sort were more general, would not there be a fine, salutary clearing of the intellectual atmosphere?

But let us not be utopian. Every man has his opinions, and it seems that they are held the most firmly when they represent the least intellectual effort. The average man has no use for a tentative opinion. Fine distinctions are a bother to him—that is, they would be if he didn't so easily ignore them. Inertitude is not tolerable and seems indeed a queer perversion of certain critics who are always at hand to cast doubt upon ideas that being simple and popular and gratifying ought to be maintained with virtuous certainty. As a rule, the opinion that we hear in the informal public forums where groups of men foregather have a robust air of sound, unshakable conviction. They are "he-man" opinions—husky, hairy-chested, deep-voiced, and tight-fisted. It is regarded as effeminate to be speculative, doubtful, impartial, or agnostic. Solid opinions—they are what men want—and how cheap they are: if only money could be picked up as easily! These are opinions which do not follow upon the asking of questions but that are, first and last, forthright assertions.

How men acquire these opinions is no secret. They are made up of hearsay, unchecked impressions, hasty, unreflecting glimpses at the spectacle of life. The average man devotes scarcely any thought, correctly speaking, or any time worth counting to the formation of his opinions. He does not even form his opinions. He gets them bottled with labels, and with directions how to take. He is a practical fellow though credulous and the opinions which are most popularly expressed and easily comprehended are most agreeable to him. They are, of course, quite the opinions which can most readily be fitted to his mind and life, assuming that the beaten path of custom and orthodoxy is uninquiringly followed by him without a thought of any other course. We take it—we may safely take it—that this average man is satisfied with the prevailing social forms, classifications and opinions, which means that he has no use for ideas that are disturbingly heretical and in contradiction of common notions. He is not of the select, bold, endlessly inquisitive company of truth-seekers, although when he holds an opinion he holds it as true.

A great many of the average man's opinions are derived from the newspapers, from the statements of leading citizens, from preachers, politicians and other persons in authority. He is not very critical, although he is fond of the pretense of weighing and judging; at any rate, he never differs from the popular oracles on the fundamentals: and while there are differences of party and creed and the like which are customarily permissible, the average man does not freely (or, as he would put it, recklessly) carry his opinions to the point of heresy or outright skepticism or any sinister attitude of rebellion. His opinions, though positive, are in a manner timid and certainly safe—and perhaps their being safe is what makes them so positive.

It would be unfortunate if the average man had to fare opinionatively along new, unmarked ways, really deciding questions for himself, learning about (or getting opinions about) man and society and nature on his own account. Probably he would be at no loss for opinions under any circumstances; but, as it happens, he is born and raised in an environment which contains all manner of simple, prepared, positive opinions which he can make his own. He becomes aware of certain formulas in common use, by which men and ideas and events are superficially but firmly judged. There are any number of "sayings" which he accepts on credit, without definitely giving thought to whether they are credible or not; for have they not the security of popular approval, and what more is needed?

It must indeed be assumed that he observes life to some extent,

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Traffic in Women and Children

Extract from League of Nations Report (1927)

"The facts . . . show that the international traffic in women is still an ugly reality and that it continues to defy the efforts made to suppress it. . . . An exact knowledge of the facts, active supervision and the application of suitable laws and measures of protection, are all necessary elements in the campaign against the traffic. . . . The traffic [is] of an international character. . . . if a neighboring country fails to exercise the same supervision, traffickers then immediately transfer to that country the scene of their operations in connection with the despatch and reception of women."

"The Story of a Terrible Life"

The Amazing Career of a Notorious Procureuse

UNBELIEVABLE! Such a word might be flung against this book if it were not readily demonstrable that conditions such as it depicts really do exist. Basil Tozer, the author, has in the course of his wanderings come upon a woman who was one of the most notorious procureuses of Europe. A clever and experienced newspaper interviewer, he succeeded in worming out of her, bit by bit, the whole story of her atrocious career, and in this book he sets down all that she told him. She revealed the methods which are still employed to entice away girls and young women without chance of their ever afterwards being traced: the secrets and secret organizations of the modern *maisons de tolerance* in different parts of the world; the wiles to which male and female blackmailers and others have recourse, and much else that is of absorbing interest concerning the social evil known as the "white slave traffic." This book, while extremely outspoken, is in no way pornographic. On the contrary, it will be instrumental in setting on their guard all those who read it. This story of an actual "Madame" will intrigue and horrify you from its first sentence: "A woman of atrocious life has lately died in France."

A SNATCH OR TWO FROM THE OPENING PAGES

Nowhere was there sign of human habitation, and they seemed to be miles from everywhere. The distance to the castle must have been 14 or 15 miles, judging by the time they took to get there; and by the time they arrived, after their long drive through dense forest, darkness had set in. Then, in the light of the rising moon, Messaline beheld for the first time the tall, forbidding gray walls of the centuries old pile standing out in blurred relief. The great oak door was opened silent.

"The Story of a Terrible Life," by Basil Tozer; bound in red cloth, with green title-lettering in mounted panels on front and back; 242 pages, 22 chapters; \$2.65 postpaid.

Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas

Again, we think of the enormous flood of misrepresentation about Russia, lurid and excessive and repeatedly contradicting itself, which found such a willing audience. By training hostile to these Bolshevik revolutionists, the average man was eager to believe the worst that could be reported about their ideas and activities. On the other hand, the minority of enthusiasts on behalf of Communism were just as uncritical in accepting propaganda favorable to their side. Few were free-minded, wanting only a truthful, impartial account, and reserving their opinions when the facts were obscure.

Lies are swift and effective. You know the saying by Mark Twain: "A lie can travel half-way round the world while the truth is getting its boots on." One reason, of course, is that there are such powerful, efficient agencies interested in spreading the lies. Truth, certainly in any matter involving orthodoxy, is represented by a minority, who not only have a greater task of conviction but a more limited and difficult access to the public mind. Aside from this, and even in matters where no particular orthodox interest is at stake, error is facilitated by the well-known carelessness, the lack of equipment in knowledge and criticism, of most persons who are engaged in spreading opinions and reporting facts (or their poor impression of the facts). And the average man, taking in all these impressions and all this hearsay, is uncritically led astray even when he has no strong wish to believe.

He is an incompetent judge. He is not even in a small way, within the limits possible to him, really an investigator. He is unfamiliar with the sound rules of evidence. He is not informed as to the reliability of sources, and does not make a careful distinction between expert and inexperienced testimony. He may accept as "authorities" men who know very little if any more about a subject than he knows himself; and, not being a student and being concerned almost wholly with popular spokesmen and their views, he seldom comes into contact with the genuine, critical authorities who have carefully investigated a subject over a wide field of evidence.

A vigilant, reflective, analytical, observant mind, with a broad scope of inquiry, is essential to the forming of full-length valid opinions: it is this attitude of mind which the free man solely respects and which he endeavors conscientiously to maintain. It is

the lack of this mental discrimination and clarity which multiplies and assures a strikingly persistent life to popular errors. These are errors of reasoning but for the most part they are errors due to narrow, haphazard, inadequate observation. Isolated facts and casual impressions do not make a solid nor anything like a sensible basis for opinions. If a man knows very little about a subject, it follows that his opinion about that subject will have very little value. Freedom of mind does not mean irresponsibility: rather it means the highest kind of responsibility—a mind responsible to truth alone, preferring a candid skepticism—a suspended judgment—to snap judgment and facile, baseless opinions.

2. Table Talk

To get some idea of popular errors, of the facility with which people render judgments which are unsupported by knowledge or correct reasoning, let us sit at table in an average home and hearken critically to the talk. We shall consider subjects in which common error most notoriously reports itself. And if these subjects do not come strictly under the head of table talk, they are nevertheless subjects of popular discussion. They are discussed with all manner of impressionistic vagaries, yet with a tone of ripe conviction, an air of final and assured judgment. Nor shall we deal with imaginary opinions, unfairly ascribed to the average man and which he would disclaim, but with those views and sentiments which continually appear in ordinary conversation of a serious turn.

We might begin very simply by a glance at a very familiar subject on which the average man has quite decided and, even so, unscientific opinions: namely, that of character reading. There is a common belief that character can be told at first meetings by looking at a person's face, by a rapid impressionistic survey. Even when a man admits that he is a poor judge of character, he is sure that others are able to understand instantly what manner of man a stranger is. Intelligence, honesty, kindness, temper, industry—all points of character—are thought to be written on a man's countenance as on an open book. Indeed, this belief is carried farther and the average man will infer certain qualities of character from a portrait in the paper.

Now, there is nothing more unscientific than this notion that a mere first impression, taken by itself, can furnish a true insight into another's character. It is

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True that we judge people by our contacts with them, and even a slight contact is not entirely without significance. But even when we meet a person for the first time, we have other criteria than merely the shape or expression of his face. We tell something by his manner; his reactions even to trivial things; his talk; and his resemblance (in which we may be misled) to persons whom we do know intimately. Judging merely by faces, we might credit a dullard with wisdom because he has a solemn and impressive countenance; we might mistake an untrustworthy fellow for a man of honor because he has a smooth and innocent countenance; and conversely a man with an unprepossessing appearance might be rated poorly when, as a matter of fact, he is a person of very fine character and intelligence. We know such errors in judgment are constantly being made.

Yet such is the tenacity with the average man sticks to the opinion that he can thus rapidly read character that he conveniently forgets the many times that he has failed, and recalls only the examples that seem to bear out his theory. The thing is reduced to formula: certain features of eyes, hair, nose, mouth, chin, etc., are held positively to be connected with certain characteristics and everyone falls facially into these rough and ready classifications. Again, when this kind of classification is contradicted by facts, the facts are ignored or somehow explained away; and no one thinks to keep a really scientific check on the theory and to find out, by an extensive and carefully recorded observation, just how reliable the theory may be. Yet anyone can disprove any of these classifications by examples familiarly at hand among his acquaintances.

The truth is that this sort of "character reading" is largely guess work; one may hit it right or one may not; and the average man often pays unpleasantly for such errors. We cannot, after all, judge a man's character unless we know the man very well; unless we have seen him in action under various circumstances; unless we know his thoughts, his associations, his habits, and the like. Even when we know a man thus intimately, we are often surprised by things he does, we are often disillusioned as to estimates which we have formed as the result of long and close contact: then how much more likely are we to be mistaken in any judgment that is based upon a casual impression. These popular notions of character illustrate remarkably the unscientific way in which the average man jumps to conclusions. How can opinions thus reached be very accurate?

Similarly, there is the fallacy that what is called a "hunch" has a very important significance—is a kind of intuitive wisdom—and will not fail one, being a safer guide than deliberation. Theoretically, such a thing cannot be explained to the satisfaction of a free-thinking mind; but what is more, it will not stand the test (if that test be sufficiently broad) of experience. Here, too, the believer in "hunches" keeps in mind only the instances when such feelings have been justified by the event. The many occasions on which this so-called intuition has missed fire, has been merely a deception, are forgotten because they do not jibe with this fascinating theory.

Nor does the average man perceive the natural association of ideas which often gives rise to such "intuitions"—feelings which are no more mysterious than they are infallible. A great many of such "intuitions" are merely wishes; and if you act upon a wish, you may of course realize that wish—and again you may not. If you think of a friend and then immediately meet that friend, you have simply fallen upon a natural coincidence: and a little observation will prove that in the great majority of cases the friend does not appear magically at the bidding of the thought. You feel, let us say, that something very important and decisive is imminent in your life: as important happenings are likely to occur at times in anyone's life, this feeling and the event may occur close together: this is possible and requires no "intuition" to explain it, but do you take critically into account the many times when such a feeling has led to nothing out of the ordinary?

What is a "hunch," anyway? Upon examination, you will perhaps find that it is only what we may call an especially rapid feat of reason or decision and that, far from being intuitive, it is composed of a number of habitual factors of thinking, springing

as naturally from your temperament and circumstances as any more deliberate resolution.

One subject which throws the door wide open for vagaries, loose conclusions and unchecked impressions is that of the differences in nature and behavior between the sexes. It is certainly a feast of unreason and a flow of extravagance when the average man sets forth the peculiarities and mysteries of the feminine nature, or when the average woman ventures to analyze the masculine temperament. Here the insidious error of generalization is found in all its flourishing perversity.

"Men are stubborn"—which is to say this is a typical masculine trait. It is, of course, an individual trait and is found both in men and women, and is decidedly not true of many persons belonging to either sex. There are men who are too agreeable to be stubborn, men who are too weak to be stubborn, men who are not sufficiently sure of their own minds to be stubborn; and the same is true of women—they differ individually and are not marked with any absolute character as a sex, simply to be generalized in this popular fashion.

And men say: "Women are impulsive or erratic." This is another sweeping statement to which there are so many exceptions that it cannot reasonably be taken as a guide to the feminine nature. In one's own immediate circle of acquaintance, one can instantly call to mind a number of impulsive men and orderly, deliberate women. Like most popular errors, this can easily be tested and disproved.

Or the average man will say that a woman never knows her own mind. Yet many men would have to contradict this notion and confess that, in their personal experience, certain women know—or perhaps one woman knows—too certainly and unyieldingly. And by the same token there are plenty of men who evidently are vague and wishy-washy in their attitude toward life.

Again, in a complimentary vein, women are supposed to have more delicate, gentle, sympathetic feelings than men. It is a pure illusion. Here too we must judge people by individuality and not by sex. One is not at a loss for examples of rough unsympathetic women, blunt and awkward women, ill-favored and ungracious women; and, on the other hand, the supposedly feminine qualities of gentleness and grace are discovered in a great many of the masculine sex.

It is said again that women are deceitful, as if this were a peculiarity of the sex, and as if the innumerable deceptions and chicaneries practiced by men in the struggle of life were not sufficient proof that this trait is humanly general rather than womanishly specific. Inconsistently, it is also held that women are more innocent (i. e., less shrewd and world-wise and infernally clever) than men; and the old-fashioned woman was innocent in her narrow sphere or had to appear so: but her innocence or her deceit was not due

to a fundamental law of her nature but to social influences.

There is another generalization which is to the effect that women judge ideas and situations personally, with the implication that men are quite impersonal in their judgments. But the fact is that both men and women on the average are very personal in their opinions: their associations, prejudices, emotions, wishes, etc., have irrationally a great weight in determining their beliefs. The average person, man or woman, is also prone to confuse personalities and ideas. Looking carefully at this generalization, we find that it only leads us to the admission that the majority of people, regardless of sex, are poor reasoners as they are indeed poor observers.

Certainly the average man's opinion of women and the average woman's opinion of men are not soundly reasoned nor carefully based upon a considerable, convincing amount of evidence. These opinions are for the most part sweeping, arbitrary, impulsive, and inaccurately loose. They are mocked at every turn by the actual behavior of men and women. Even where a real difference exists between the behavior of men and women, that difference is assumed to be naturally inherent when it may, on the contrary, be socially imposed or acquired.

Perhaps the subtle (or the not so subtle) sex antagonism between men and women explains these wrong opinions. It seems the tendency of one sex to be unfair in its judgment of the other; and even the chivalric gestures and notions of the man are based upon the superior feeling that the woman is comparatively weak and delicate. It is sufficient, however, to explain these false ideas of sexual difference by the careless impressionism of the average man or woman. They judge by a few instances, impressions here and there, a bit of hearsay, and the like. It was said of old that bricks could not be made without straw, but a few straws of rumor and a few unrelated, unstudied instances will suffice to make a pretty large-sized, hefty opinion.

Consider how recklessly men generalize about nationalities and their traits: the English are stiff-necked, the Irish are hot-tempered, the Scotch are niggardly, the French are immoral, the Germans are dull, the Italians are treacherous, the Spaniards are lazy, and so on. Now, the point is that these opinions are confidently held by persons who have never traveled abroad, who have never made the slightest study of the history and customs of these nations, and who have actually known very few individuals of a nationality that they presume to define with finality. To put it simply, they don't know what they are talking about. But this does not prevent them from having an opinion. One might even say that an opinion can be had more quickly and confidently when there is no tedious concern with facts.

There are, again, the many popular superstitions concerning weather signs and influences, con-

cerning good and bad luck, concerning the significance of dreams. To say that these beliefs are superstitious is of course to brand them as unscientific. They are unscientific when put to the one surest test of observation: with the average man they are not due even to an incomplete use of scientific method, for he has simply heard these things and accepts them as true without bothering to make the slightest investigation of the facts. Obviously these superstitions can have no realistic basis, since a very little consideration in the spirit of realism must show how untrue they are. It is simply a case of reaching conclusions about man, life and nature without paying direct, careful attention to the realities.

If the average man would take certain leading opinions and, for say, a period of one month check them steadily and thoroughly by the facts, he would find his structure of beliefs pretty shaky at the end of that time; but of course that is what the average man will not do; he has been at no pains to get his opinions and he will be at no pains to surrender them. In so busy a life, and with so many things to have an opinion about, why worry with facts?

3. The Free Man

In discussing these popular errors, in illustrating briefly but clearly enough the unsoundness of opinions, we naturally suggest, by contrast, the methods by which the free man arrives at his beliefs. Why does he not fall into these common errors? It is not really a matter of accident nor yet of intuition. Nor is it because he has any better means of observation than the average man. But he makes full and consistent use of observation which others ignore.

He has a trained mind. His mind is not a receptacle in which opinions are to be dumped carelessly. It is, let us say, a machine that tests opinions, rejecting those which are misleading, superficial, partial and false.

In the main, his attitude is quite simple. He makes it a point clearly to see and understand the facts which are conveniently before his eyes; and this is something which the average man will not do, even choosing to deny an obvious fact rather than revise an opinion. For example, the errors which we have considered do not require any profound intellectuality for their disproof. One need not be an extraordinary, indefatigable scholar to perceive the falsity of these notions. What is needed, after all, is only a recognition of the obvious. These notions are contradicted by the common features of everyday life, and no man who lives at all observantly and reflectively could conceivably believe these notions.

It is, then, by using his eyes and his wits in the simplest realistic manner that the free man keeps clear of these fallacies. Of course, with practice he naturally develops a sharper and sharper perception of the bunkistic element in opinions, and this is because

he becomes so thoroughly familiar with the characteristically defective workings of the average mind. He is familiar with the traps of vanity, self-interest, sentimentalism, carelessness and premature judgment into which men commonly fall. He knows that there is one safe method to follow: namely, the skeptical method. He knows that credulity, exaggerated by long social training in the interest of certain dogmas, is a weakness of the human mind. He knows that men generally are in the first place very poor observers, in the second place very poor reporters, and in the third place very poor reasoners.

The free man is, then, a great deal more patient and critical and broadly aware in his handling of facts: he does not make use of them scantily nor sporadically nor arbitrarily, but he continually looks for them and refers to them in the formation of his opinions. He has of course considerably more curiosity than the average man. He goes farther afield in his quest of facts. He looks more sharply and thoughtfully at the immediate life around him and he goes to the books—the real books, of sound scholars and critics—for a wider knowledge than he can hope di-

The Aim of Common Beliefs Seems to Be "Anything But the Truth"

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

1. The Illusion of Free Will

It will be useful to get clearly in mind certain general ideas which determine the viewpoint of the average man—which distinguish the average man from the man who is intellectually free—and which stand as obstacles in the way of free thinking. There are assumptions which significantly underlie the beliefs of the average man and which, whatever those beliefs in detail may be, are reflected in their nature. And on these fundamentals of a popular creed, it is safe to say that nine out of ten men agree.

To illustrate: It is a common belief that man is a creature of free will. Doubt and especially any serious criticism on this point is rare. Although he has probably never heard of the philosophic arguments concerning free will and determinism, the average holds the former position almost, one might say, naturally. It seems obvious to him that he has powers of selection, decision, and free action. He may admit that "Man proposes but God disposes." But, he will say, while God interferes soon or late and at critical times, often quite unexpectedly and in ways that are incomprehensible, meanwhile he leaves men as free and morally responsible agents. They have the choice of right or wrong. They can call the tune, but they must pay the fiddler. As this belief is familiarly expressed, "Life is what one makes it." Be good and you will be happy, amen.

But this idea must logically be

rectly to acquire without such study. He has trained standards of comparison, a shrewd understanding of the values of evidence, and an awareness of reliable sources—unlike the average man, who takes an opinion uncritically from any popular spokesman, he distinguishes between opinions that are based upon a thorough knowledge of a subject and opinions that are mere impressions, rhetoric, and hearsay.

And of course one has not merely to observe facts, but one must draw reasonable conclusions from them and bring them into orderly shape; and here again the free man differs from the average in that he has an orderly mind: that is to say, within the limits of his intellectual interests (for naturally each man has his limits) he observes correctly and reasons logically. He does not, like the average man, leap irresponsibly to conclusions. He does not generalize from a handful of accidental and ill-assorted facts. He distinguishes between pseudo-authorities that rest upon expert knowledge. And, finally, he does not think that he must have an opinion on every subject: he will, so to speak, earn his opinions or go without them.

carried a step farther. It is not enough to say that life is what a man makes it: to be theoretically consistent, it should be added that a man is what he makes himself. We are not all cast precisely in the same mold, standing equal as to nature and levelly free as to choice. And can it be said that we are individually responsible for our differences? By the time we are old enough to understand life more or less (and this capacity for understanding is another point of difference), to have what is called a mature awareness of ourselves and the world, to choose (as the free-will believer would say) for ourselves, we have already been powerfully directed and deeply committed as to character. We have already been to a great extent "made" for better or worse, and it is certainly difficult to show that this making has been of our responsibility.

Just when, we may ask, does a man become a free moral agent? At what point does choice—pure and unhampered choice—begin? It is generally acknowledged, for example, that a man does not choose his parents. In theory, many would like to change their parentage if they could, although the usage of affection would complicate this as a practical step. And if a man has no choice of parents, what a great many contradictions of the free-will theory does this force upon our consideration. This means that a man has nothing to say about his heredity: and will it be denied that heredity is a very great influence in everyone's life, an influence from which no one can escape, an influence which affects our first choice as it does our last choice in life? It follows, again, that a man cannot choose whether he shall be born a Chinaman or an American; in the city or the country, with consequently a different environment in his upbringing; rich or poor; of intelligent or ignorant parents; healthy or congenitally tainted in body; wanted or unwanted, bastardly or legitimate.

Nor can a man choose the age in which he is born. We are lucky, that's all, not to have been born in the twelfth century. Our "choice"—for we must doubtfully set this term in quotation marks—would have been very different if we had been children of the medieval age. And if we could have delayed our appearance in the human comedy for several hundred years—if we could have been born, say, in the year 3000—who can fail to see that our "choice" must have been tremendously altered by this matter of time?

These reflections are bound to occur to the free mind (and, by the way, the word "free" is always used relatively). The idea of free will subjected to a rational analysis, is found to be bristling with logical difficulties. We think of a man as a mature, complete, independent character, a fully responsible agent capable of making his life what he will: we think of him in an absolute sense, as one standing apart from the vital, deep-seated influences of the past and the incessantly compelling circumstances of his present daily

life; we forget that which has made the man's character as we also, superficially observing him as a creature of action, forget that he is primarily and always a creature who is acted upon, a creature whose actions are reactions.

For what is this thing called choice save a yielding to the strongest force which bears upon us at a given moment? We choose? But what makes us choose? "We" exist, "we" act, "we" choose if you will in relation to the forces and objects of life which affect us in varying degrees of attraction and repulsion. Not having absolute personality or power, held as we are within the limits of a relative existence, we cannot have free will. None will dispute the fact that a man's "choice" is sometimes more difficult, more doubtful, more hesitant than at other times. What does this fact signify? It means that the factors which determine our "choice" are more complicated or more nearly equal, that the little extra weight of influence which compels action is not immediately felt; when we do act it is because the motivating balance has been inclined decisively one way or another; and the conclusion is that we have not chosen at all but have followed the line of least resistance or the pull of the strongest force.

If men were more given to an analysis of their behavior, if they were carefully to trace in a spirit of scientific curiosity the origin and path of any so-called "choice," they would find it less simple yet really more comprehensible than the free-will theory implies. But of course this sort of reflection is very unusual. It appears to the average man that he can, certainly in a moral sense, do as he freely will. He sees only the action itself and himself as the actor, and beyond that he does not venture in critical scrutiny.

Yet even the average man must admit limitations to his will. There are economic, legal and social limitations; there are limitations of opportunity—of talent—even, or especially, of desire. It is fair to mention this limitation of desire. For if a man is genuinely a creature of free will, then he can choose to desire good rather than evil, wisdom rather than folly, the best in life of character and culture rather than a petty compromise with inferior things. We are far more truly the creatures of our desires than we are agents of free will.

And how explain this intriguing variety of desire, this difference of tone and taste in the lives of individuals, to which we must always return significantly in any discussion of free will? The structure and chemistry of one man's body is different from another's; the factors of heredity differ in individuals; percentage and early training are not the same with all; and the innumerable, incessant influence of environment vary in a thousand ways among individuals—even among individuals who, broadly speaking, are placed in a similar sphere of life; no two persons, though they be twin brothers, can have exactly the same environment; and in the first place, spite of all resemblances, they are two distinct personalities. This being true, it is foolish to talk about free choice: that freedom must be complete or—it is not freedom. We cannot logically say, for example, that a man assumes the character of a free moral agent at the age of twenty-one; we cannot thus dismiss his heredity, his parentage, his childhood and youth, his time and place of living. Consider it from any conceivable angle, and the theory of free will is seen to be illogical, untenable, incredibly at odds with the plain facts of life.

The average man holds this theory because, for one thing, he doesn't think about it—study it thoroughly in all its bearings—or take it apart and see what considerations it is composed of. It is a superficial theory—which, seeing an action and an actor, looks no farther down the long pathway of causation and suspects no other elements in the drama. It is, too, an egoistic theory. It flatters a man's vanity, appealing to his pride and giving him an added sense of importance. It is very personal, defying impersonal argument, being thus comparable to man's belief that he has a soul and that he is immortal. It is, again, naturally the theory which, in the absence of reflection and a scientific view of life, man would turn to in simple belief. It is easier for a man to believe it than not, since to go beyond it requires an intellectual effort—not so much a great as an upsetting effort—and without

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it he feels uncomfortably confused in his ideas: he craves simplicities and certitudes and the free-will theory, accepted unthinkingly, satisfies him.

And such a theory means an unscientific view of life: it is a barrier between a man's thinking and the deeper realities. To understand any subject and deal with it intelligently, one must seek in a thorough and impersonal way the causes of things. This search will not go very far on the strength of the free-will theory that life presents only a problem of individual choice. Scientifically, any branch of knowledge is a study of conditions and causes rather than individuals moving freely along self-appointed courses. The individual is significant only in connection with all the other factors.

The belief in free will is not consistent with the scientific, evolutionary explanation of things. It encourages a false idea of history: the new understanding of history, which emphasizes geographical, economic and social factors far greater than mere individual responsibility, and which traces broadly the interplay of events which overwhelm human choice, reveals the weakness of the free-will theory. For example, it is childish to regard history as simply a record of the decisions and exploits of great men: so regarded it is not only incomplete as a record, but it is worthless as an explanation. Back of the actions of great men and the movements of masses are mighty social forces which require something more than personal interpretation.

In the study of human behavior—in the study of ethics and sociology—the free-will theory, is an obstacle to clear thinking and prevents, in the first place, a sufficient observation. It opposes paradoxically, the sort of "free-dom" which man may have through a correct understanding of the forces which really determine action. The conception of progress, of environmental study and policy, of dealing with causes rather than symptoms, is a repudiation of the doctrine of free will. And this doctrine alone, if firmly adhered to, would prevent the average man from taking a broad view and having a basic understanding of any subject. It is not surprising that with his belief in this doctrine the average man's ideas are hopelessly superficial and illogical.

2. Indifference to Truth

Another feature which comes significantly to the fore in the average man's attitude toward life is the indifference to truth: or if truth seems at once too vague and too imposing a word, let us say that the average man is prone to have a poor regard for facts and a low conception, if he may be said to have any conception at all, of the use of reason. It has

been said that reason, however clearly and completely it may deal with a subject, will not convince the average man. He is, in a word, not amenable to argument although he dearly loves to argue in his way, which is that of juggling facts and seeking for any points, however irrelevant or uncertain, which may be offered in defense of his beliefs.

It is well known that few people are interested in studying both sides (or the many sides) of a question. The spirit of truth-seeking is not in them. They have not open minds, but rather their minds are decidedly closed to all considerations which might prove embarrassing to their preconceived and perversely defended notions.

If the weight of evidence and reason is strongly in favor of an idea, then it seems that anyone not actually stupid should accept that idea as true. And on the other hand it would seem that an idea which is without sound evidential basis and which indeed is in opposition to certain vital facts of life would not receive intellectual consideration. But this is an ideal of intellectual impartiality which we must regrettably dismiss in studying the actual processes of human thought. It is not just a matter of ignorance or stupidity. Intelligent men are confused in their thinking by a number of influences—social, emotional, imitative, temperamental—which are really not valid in application to ideas. A brilliant man is all the more ingenious in finding reasons for what he wants to believe. He can ably rationalize any viewpoint that is agreeable to his nature or his position in society and with a technique of fine-drawn sophistry can select and arrange facts in any color and combination.

If this happens with intelligent men, how much more does it apply to the ideas of the average man, who may be less skillful in making a case but is, of course, satisfied with a less adroit kind of rationalization and can hold with remarkable stubbornness to the most poorly reasoned, indeed the most obviously false, idea. The average man is a pragmatist with regard to truth. Pragmatism is a philosophy that he never heard of, yet roughly he applies it. Ideas are judged by whether they are pleasing and suitable to him. His attitude toward them is not intellectual but—in a narrow sense—practical. A conception of reality, unconfused by temporary interests and sentimental predilections, is quite foreign to the average man. To look all around a subject and to analyze it thoroughly both in its theoretical and practical aspects is an operation, rare and difficult indeed, which is not even attempted by the majority.

It is rare—which simply means that few have this intellectual thoroughness and as it were fine,

diligent conscience. It is difficult—which is not the same as to say that it is useless, but which means primarily that this disposition toward ideas must open the way for a clear method of approach: and it is this disposition which, in the first place, the average man does not have.

Evidently when ideas are treated irresponsibly as mere convenient pawns in a game, having no value in themselves, or having an arbitrary value given to them which is superior to all considerations of reason—then we are not surprised at the resulting jumble of beliefs. These beliefs do not have their origin in the desire for truth. They have not been acquired as the definite material of knowledge; nor are they fully, soundly realistic in their application to life; they are beliefs which, in the mere believing, are supposed to be valuable. Confront such beliefs with the most formidable armament of reason, and the average man is not shaken in his allegiance to them. He didn't, strictly speaking, reason himself into them and he will not reason himself out of them. These beliefs look well; they leave one with a comfortable feeling; they are simple and not burdensome to the mind; they are cherished fondly through familiar usage; they are satisfactory—and if a belief is satisfactory, if it seems true and good and altogether sufficient to a man, what more can he ask?

Lacking intellectual curiosity and a determination to go to the bottom of things, he would not make any further demand upon an idea than that it should agreeably fit into his mind and life. And that, plainly, is a matter of culture. It is clear, for example, that a yoke can get along with a set of ideas which would be intolerable to a man of education: not that the latter is free from illusions, or approaches ideas purely from an intellectual viewpoint, but that he could not be satisfied with such crude ideas as, with a yoke, would be entirely fitting.

Viewed in this dim shifting light, the most opposite ideas can serve as "truth." Whatever a man can comfortably and successfully believe, that he may well defend and faithfully adhere to as the "truth," regardless of his capacity for thinking, the extent of his knowledge, and the non-intellectual factors which weigh decisively in his beliefs. Medieval ideas were in this sense true so long as men were perfectly willing to believe. They ceased to be true when they were shown to be false. It is, you see, quite a tangled web of sophistical phraseology: that is to say, it is a play upon words and, like the free-will illusion, the more one analyzes it the more hollow it is found to be under its engaging surface.

Yet this pseudo-philosophic justification of ideas as merely and sufficiently the reflection of irresponsible individual tastes—as depending rightly not upon truth but upon the will to believe—is after all an esoteric viewpoint not shared by the average man. He takes his ideas more seriously than that and feels it his duty to assert them as the genuine, unchanging, unrivaled truth. To be sure, his defense of them does not always have reference to their truth. He resorts, for the lack of anything better, to pragmatic arguments. His attitude toward ideas, first and last, is not that of deliberate, impartial concern for the truth. For reason, fearlessly and thoroughly employed, he has little or no use. No matter how powerfully facts contradict his beliefs, still he clings fondly to the beliefs and rejects the facts—and evidently for the very simple reason that he doesn't hold a belief because it is true but because it is satisfactory to him.

Indifference to truth is not a conscious attitude with the average man. He is the sport of influences which he does not perceive or does not correctly identify in their real significance. He is raised in an atmosphere of many-featured prejudice, and surrounded by the constant pressure of that prejudice, so that it is impossible for him to consider ideas freely. On any subject that really concerns him he follows the leading of his prejudice; and ideas which are aloof from his sphere of prejudice and interest are disregarded. He has no desire for knowledge which, in his narrow way, he would brand as useless; he may even feel that he is protecting himself from unknown dangers, for that wider knowledge, which does not immediately seem to be pertinent to any interests or beliefs in his life, may give a new and less flattering

complexion to those very interests and may unsettle those very beliefs.

It is not unusual, indeed, for spokesmen of orthodoxy to issue warnings against the pitfalls of critical literature. And those who stress devoutly the criterion of faith, or who place ideas in other non-intellectual defensive roles, are apt to speak of reason in a depreciatory tone, as something insidious, even corrupting, and not safely to be dealt with by those who would be true to their truth-slighting beliefs.

Again, in every subject of dispute we find the sentimental attitude extremely active in obscuring the truth. Prejudices, loyalties, associations, desires, and emotional predilections create a vast maze of mistaken considerations through which the average man wanders with the object of truth lost to sight. He wants, pragmatically, a pleasant and convenient view rather than, intellectually, a true view. His ideas are reflections of his training, his sentimentality and his self-interest—the force of self-interest is indeed second to none in the determination of what the average man believes; of course he may not be very intelligent as to what his interests really are—he may be deceived by men who know their interests far better—but, at any rate, he is inhospitable to any aspect of truth which seems to him in conflict with or critically disturbing of his interests and desires.

And, finally, it is all the more easy for the average man to rest satisfactorily in beliefs that are not true because he has never asked himself what truth is, what is its nature and aim, what are the factors that determine it, what are the means of ascertaining it. He has never deliberately resolved, with a full sense of intellectual responsibility, to seek truth wherever it leads and to know, if not final and complete truth, as much of truth as may be known. He has not the truth-seeking attitude. He craves other satisfactions and assurances. He is indifferent to truth and, if it is thrust upon his attention, he finds it irritating and irrelevant.

3. Truth and Numbers

When the influence of the yoke, in Tennessee obtained the passage of the law excluding evolution from the state schools, we observed the application of another rule by which the average man judges the worth of beliefs. Wisdom resides, for him, in the greatest number. If an idea has only a minority of adherents that is taken as *prima facie* evidence of its undesirability or—as the term is loosely used—of its untruth. In the case of evolution, it is doubtless true that most people accept it as a general principle although they do not logically follow it to its various conclusions; but in Tennessee evolution apparently was an undemocratic and impious heresy; and as the majority (or, at any rate, a legislatively effective force of public opinion) condemned it as wrong, it remained only to forcibly assert that opinion with all the authority of the state.

Intolerance has its limits in modern society—at least so far as the laws are concerned—and one may differ from the majority without running the risk of imprisonment or the stake. But one is judged unfavorably by the average man, not with thoughtful regard to one's ideas in their own right, but first of all with regard to the exceptional, unpopular standing of one's ideas. "Whatever is, is right"—this is an essential article in the creed of the average man. He takes the world, its customs, its ideas uncritically—things as they are seem quite good enough for him—and, without reasoning, the prevailing gospel, social and moral and religious, is considered to be naturally and inevitably right. Whoever stands forth as a critic of these commonly accepted ideas and institutions is said to be suffering from the egotistic delusion that he is smarter than the majority of his fellows. There is even felt to be an impoliteness, a lack of good taste, in the act of maintaining an individual or a minority opinion against the overwhelming weight of numbers. How can millions of people be wrong and a few men here and there, differing from these millions, be right?

It seems unfitting to the average man that this should be possible. It is of course an affront to his vanity for he, being numbered among the millions, has a corresponding pride of opinion; and, again, this theory that popularity and numbers is not the

guide to right thinking would make things more difficult for him mentally, for if a man cannot easily adopt the current views and be satisfied of their truth, what is he to do? He is plunged into confusion. Or—and here's the rub—he must think for himself. He must seek the truth along unfamiliar paths, in strange far places, among outlandish minorities, probably running it down in the midst of most unpleasant company.

But then the average man never lets himself doubt for a minute that whatever is currently believed by the greatest numbers has, by the mere fact of this numerical recommendation, the validity and the virtue of truth. And having this bias in favor of the most widely sanctioned opinions, he is so much farther removed from the possibility of recognizing the truth. It is one more handicap to his mind—actually a handicap, clearly a handicap as the free man sees it, but not of course seen in this light by the average man. He embraces it gladly, as the perfectly sure and simple attitude, shared by all good men and true. Indeed, there is often a sort of pity for the man who stands outside the pale of common opinions, alone (or with few to bear him company), suspected, condemned to defeat (as superficially and contemporarily it appears), denied the reassurance of numbers.

It is, to be sure, not a question of pity one way or the other. Admittedly, a man can get along very nicely by agreeing with the majority—if he happens to have that kind of a mind. There are some persons, however, whose mental curiosity leads them away from the broad highway of common opinion: this mischief is done, really, when a man first gets the notion (queer notion, but it will occasionally suggest itself) that the truth of an idea is something quite apart from the number of its adherents. At once he dismisses the all too simple rule that "whatever is, is right" or that "The majority can't be wrong." He looks thereafter impartially for the truth and he may discover it on what the majority has condemned as forbidden or "infidel" ground.

Breaking away from the rule of numbers, a man may go farther and conclude that a majority opinion is by that token open to suspicion. That dogma, of course, is just as bad as the other if one holds to it as an invariable and absolute dogma. It is not impossible for the majority to be right. Yet it seems that, on the whole, their rightness consists in a belated recognition of the wisdom of past minorities. There are many sound ideas which have finally won majority approval which were, however, originally and for a long time unpopular. Thus ideas of heresy have, time and again, found a place in the sun of a later orthodoxy. The difference is that a few men in the beginning were convinced of these heretical ideas simply because they were true; while the average man after the lapse of generations falls in with these ideas because they are recommended to him by the common approval of his fellows. He has no use for the heretics of his own time. Their arguments probably do not interest him because the mere fact of their existence violates a leading principle of his philosophy—namely, that a majority must vouch for truth, wisdom and righteousness. And sometimes—on moral questions, for example—right and wrong is decided politically by the great number.

As I say, this popular judgment of ideas stands as a barrier to the consideration of truth. It is obviously inconsistent with freedom of thought. The free man, approaching ideas without fear or prejudice, discovers that his respect for truth must frequently place him in conflict with the popular view; and that does not worry him, for he does not need the false confidence of imitation. Every man who thinks—really thinks—about life must soon decide whether he is to follow the truth or follow the crowd. Hypocrisy may strongly suggest the latter course and a man may insincerely profess allegiance to the viewpoint of the greatest number although, in the privacy of his own mind, he knows better.

In the case of the average man, this test of popularity is no doubt unconsciously or, let us say, quite honestly applied: he would not state his position as bluntly as it is stated here, but it amounts to the same thing—an idea is true in proportion to the number who believe it and, too, in proportion to the length of time it has been believed. But this attitude also

opens the door to considerations of compromise and policy, to motives of expediency which trick the undeveloped intellectual conscience, which have no place in any judgment of truth. But aside from conscience, which is too pliable to be trustworthy, this confusion of truth with numbers puts the average man fundamentally on the side of error and deflects him from a free course of thought.

4. Labels and Loyalties

We have been at pains to consider, not merely this or that specific idea of the average man, but the defects of his general attitude. He has the illusion of free-will and therefore he neglects to study the causes of things—his view of life is on the surface. He has no clear intellectual regard for the truth, but takes his beliefs as he takes his food or his amusements—that is to say, he "knows what he likes." He feels that the truth must rest with the opinions of the greatest number.

And let us consider another widespread tendency which misleads the average man, in his beliefs. It is, after all, related to that gospel of popularity which we have just examined: a group loyalty, a class feeling, a racial hostility, and a narrow provincialism. This leads the average man to identify his beliefs with his group—whether social, national or racial—and to adopt a sentiment of loyalty which is utterly aside from the question of truth. It takes the form of snobbery, and a snobbery by no means confined to those who have great wealth and social position. For in spite of the democratic theory, snobbery thrives among all classes. And does not the average man look up to the spokesmen of power, wealth and fashion in society, granting a heightened respect to their opinions? These snobbishly-rated recommendations occupy a prominent (if not frankly admitted) role in the judgments of most people. It has been suggested in satire that "A million dollars can't be wrong." Most people are worshipers of success, and a man who is eminently successful in any line has a more respectful audience for his ideas. He doesn't have to speak from knowledge: his money and position talk more powerfully in his favor.

More generally, this snobbish attitude is applied to the class identity, as it were, of ideas. The average man cannot see truth, for example, in ideas which are identified with poor, obscure, unfashionable groups. It is not simply that such ideas are not popular: they are not even respectable: the people who believe in these ideas are not important in the snobbish view. Radicalism is regarded with disfavor by the average man because, among other reasons, it is on the whole found among the least wealthy and "respectable" members of the community. It has an air of the low and improper side of life which renders it suspect and makes it impossible of honest consideration by a

man who, above all, respects conventionality, success, and social prestige.

And in speaking of radicalism, we are reminded of the facility with which labels encourage a false, superficial viewpoint. To say that an idea is "radical," for instance, is—the mere word, mind you—to create at once an attitude of suspicion and even of hostility. To obtain consideration, such an idea must first of all overcome a powerful mass of vague, stupid distrust: it has really a very poor chance, with the bad repute of that label, to be studied on its merits. In the same way, the label of "infidel" arouses an emotion of unreasoning dislike for a man an idea. No idea so labeled, it is felt, can be at all worthy of a hearing: it is beyond the pale and to discuss whether or not it may be true is an unthinkable impropriety. And, again, if certain aspects of art or thought are labeled "sordid" or "vulgar" they are dismissed with equal intolerance. Even the label of "critical" is commonly taken as a warning against ideas. Here is obviously the very thing which should recommend an intellectual attitude—for criticism means careful thinking—yet the average man regards it as a disqualification, just as he thinks that the label of "pessimistic" means that an idea is bad or false. Labels, it may be said, are doses of chloroform putting thought to sleep.

Other loyalties, with which we are all too familiar, interfere with broadness and realism of thought. We are patriotic—we are provincial—we are Nordic—we are Christian: which means that ideas which come from any source foreign to these group identifications are viewed suspiciously: they receive a slight, disrespectful hearing or perhaps they are not even given a passing glance; but if they are contrary to our preconceptions as Americans, Nordics and Christians, then they are subject not to fair and thoughtful judgment but to denunciation.

This attitude of loyalty to a group, an institution, or a tradition precludes valid, straightforward thinking by the average man. He runs with his group, right or wrong—only he will never admit that it is wrong. Loyalty is more important to him than truth or humanity or justice. He is so firmly attached to a set of opinions that he is incapable of loving the truth for its own sake. He closes his eyes and his ears to criticism. What he believes—the notions he is tender of because they are popular and have the right labels and are identified with his group and have the sanction of good form and prestige—cannot be, when all is said, discussed to any good purpose. They may be affirmed with great volubility and confidence—but not really discussed, as if the truth were an open question. Thus virtuously fitted with beliefs, resting upon many attractive considerations but generally indifferent to the truth, what use can the average man have for ideas?

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The author of this book has made a long and comprehensive study of the various causes and factors of an abnormality which is said to be increasing in Western nations. Sexual apathy and coldness have far-reaching social consequences, and are the root-cause of much matrimonial unhappiness, separations, and divorce cases. This emotional resistance to conjugal love is chiefly the result of the misguidance of young women in the art of living, and of the lack of knowledge of the scientific bearings of sex, which is deplored by many leading thinkers and physicians of Europe and America. This volume is sympathetic in tone, and contains much valuable counsel for married persons.

"Sexual Apathy and Coldness in Women," \$2.65 per copy postpaid, from Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kans.

The Moving Finger Writes

By Lloyd E. Smith

The Argonaut Affair

E. H.-J. passed my desk just now and said: "Here's the reply to my reply to the attack in the Argonaut not long ago." You remember that Edward Morphy, editor of the Argonaut, attacked the Little Blue Books in vicious and vituperative language, calling all Little Blue Book readers "prurient wretches" and other unsavory names. Mr. Haldeman-Julius replied. Both the original attack and the reply were published in the Weekly not long ago.

Here is the second attack, as published in the Argonaut:

MR. HALDEMAN-JULIUS DISAGREES.

In another column we print a letter from Mr. Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, publisher of Little Blue Books. Mr. Haldeman-Julius seems to have been angered by certain statements in an editorial in which we discussed his book, *The First Hundred Million*, and some of the practices the clever fellow boasts he employs to promote the popularity of his publications. His anger does him credit, but neither improves his logic nor alters the case against him and his methods.

Debating with Mr. Haldeman-Julius is like disputing with a mosquito: The job could be done with greater neatness and dispatch if the pest would settle down somewhere and stay put, instead of distributing his energies according to a formula that calls for nine parts of buzzing to one of action. The general effect

of the Haldeman-Julius letter is, as he says at its end, to answer his "own questions with one firm monosyllable: No." We are quite willing to answer them even more firmly with the same monosyllable; but having done so must still insist that they have nothing to do with our estimate of the man and his Little Blue Books.

Mr. Haldeman-Julius tries to make Messrs. Shakespeare, Ibsen, Poe, Kipling, Stevenson, Emerson, and Charles Chaplin partners in his enterprise by pointing out that the first six are among the authors of works reprinted in his series and that Mr. Chaplin is one of his readers. If we say that the publisher of the Little Blue Books makes his profits largely by appealing to the depraved tastes of near-illiterates we indict Shakespeare and the rest—so he argues—and classes Mr. Chaplin among the morons. His logic is like that of the criminal who argues that a man cannot be a dutiful son and affectionate husband and at the same time a murderer; and, more appropriately, like that of the disreputable seller of books that fills the window with standard literature and hidden cases with obscure works, and proves his virtue by pointing to the window.

The Little Blue Books do include Shakespeare—sixteen of the plays receive special mention—and many other standard works. Merely to reprint the classics was the original purpose of Mr. Haldeman-Julius, and as long as he stuck to works to which time had given the sanction of its approval he kept out of trouble. It was only when he began to believe that his own literary sense was good enough to permit him to

pass upon and publish original works that his nature betrayed him.

"The Little Blue Books devoted to Shakespeare's immortal plays are a portion of the series of which I have always been proud," he says in his book. "The editions are complete and verbatim—though they often run to 96 and 128 pages each, which are almost prohibitively expensive in these days of a five-cent price uniformly postpaid to any address in the world."

But let us take the figures from *The First Hundred Million* and see to what extent Mr. Haldeman-Julius cultivated readers buy Shakespeare, in comparison with their purchases of other works in the series.

	Annual Sales
SHAKESPEARE.	
Romeo and Juliet.	14,500
Julius Caesar.	9,500
The Merchant of Venice.	8,500
Hamlet.	9,000
Macbeth.	9,000
As You Like It.	9,000
The Taming of the Shrew.	9,000
A Midsummer Night's Dream.	8,000
The Comedy of Errors.	6,500
The Merry Wives of Windsor.	6,500
The Tempest.	6,500
Othello.	6,000
Twelfth Night.	5,000
Much Ado About Nothing.	5,000
King Lear.	4,000
Measure for Measure.	2,500

BLUE BOOK BEST SELLERS.

Prostitution in the Modern World.	129,500
What Married Women Should Know.	112,000
Woman's Sexual Life.	97,000
Prostitution in the Ancient World.	84,500
Illicit Love.	81,000
What Married Men Should Know.	97,500
The Art of Kissing.	60,500
Catholicism and Sex.	65,000
Prostitution in the Medieval World.	78,000
Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun.	46,000
How to Love.	52,000
Homosexual Life.	54,500
Sex Life in Greece and Rome.	56,000
Mistresses of Today.	52,500
Jokes About Married Life.	45,500
One of Cleopatra's Nights.	60,000

Mr. Haldeman-Julius is proud of the publication of Shakespeare, not of the sale. Total sales of the sixteen plays listed amounted in a year to 119,500—just 10,000 less than sales of the one Little Blue Book titled "Prostitution in the Modern World." Sales of the sixteen plays exceeded by 7,500 the sales of another book, "What Married Women Should Know." Not all the books listed in the lower column are trash, of course, but the titles would lead the near-illiterates that constitute the bulk of the Blue Book market to believe they designated books of the kind they seem to crave.

That Mr. Haldeman-Julius makes available in a cheap form the works of Shakespeare does not excuse the fact that he lifted Guy de Maupassant's "The Tattered Ball" from his hospital for sick books and made it a best seller by titling it "A French Prostitute's Sacrifice." Nor does it speak for the intelligence and decency of the bulk of his readers that Gautier's "Fleece of Gold" was vastly more popular as "The Quest for a Blonde Mistress." Hugo's "The King Enjoys Himself" under the Haldeman-Julius-given title of "The Lustful King Enjoys Himself," and Zola's "None Beneath the King" as "None Beneath the King Shall Enjoy This Woman."

The fact that Dr. John Dewey and Sir Arthur Keith and many other good men have bought Little Blue Books does not mean that they have bought "How to Love" or "What Every Married Woman Should Know" or "The Art of Kissing"—to name only three volumes among Haldeman-Julius' best sellers—nor does it mean that most of the publisher's readers are cultivated men and women. They are not. They are persons of low tastes.

One of our differences with Mr. Haldeman-Julius seems to lie in the fact that he does not think a preference for works on "How to Love" and "Illicit Love" and "Homosexual Life" indicates depravity; and we do. He says that these are the titles of books dealing with "scientific facts about biology and physiology," and from that argues that they do not appeal to prurience. But he lists "How to Love" and "Illicit Love" in a group of books headed "Love," not biology and physiology; and he lists "Homosexual Life" under "Sex." Another favorite group title is "Passion"—a word that can always be depended upon, he says, to sell books to his discriminating readers. Mr. Haldeman-Julius credits the popularity of sex books to his readers' interest in life, and defends his customers against the charge of depravity. Really, he says, they are of first-rate intelligence—cultivated men. But let him read his own testimonial to their erudition (Pages 152 and 153 of his book):

"I would have gambled a great deal on Clement Wood's biography of Casanova, especially since it was deliberately entitled *Casanova and His Loves*. The universal popularity of the 'sex books,' so called, would seem to indicate that this book on Casanova should be automatically a best seller. It did not work out that way. The diagnosis of the failure was that people did not know the name Casanova, and so they did not care a nickel's worth about whom he loved or did not love. There was a mild revolution in the sales record of this book when it was advertised as 'Casanova, History's Greatest Lover!' Witness the figures—8,000 before the change; a yearly sale of 22,000 after it! A similar example is Ralph Oppenheim's life of George Sand: it is now called, with a gain of 6,000 copies a year, 'The Love Life of a Frenchwoman.' Which proves, if anything, that the public would rather buy a book about an unknown Frenchwoman, when reminded that she is French, than one about someone whose name suggests neither nationality nor familiarity." It proves, of course, nothing of the

sort. It proves merely that a certain group of persons of barnyard tastes will buy anything with a suggestive title. But what shall we say of the quality of scholarship of readers that never heard of Casanova, and did not know whether George Sand was a man or a woman, English or French?

We quarrel with Mr. Haldeman-Julius, however, mainly because he has the bad taste to boast of sins that he ought to conceal and because he has the effrontery to say that the weakness of the great majority of his readers for matters pertaining to the gutter proves the level of American taste in reading. Lists of best sellers and lists of books most in demand in American libraries prove clearly enough, we think, the error of Mr. Haldeman-Julius' assumption; for one book popular because of its suggestiveness there are in these lists twenty popular because of real merit. These twenty are not books that the bulk of the buyers of Mr. Haldeman-Julius' first hundred million would care to have, but they are the books that American people read.

We can understand how Mr. Haldeman-Julius might have been so insensitive to the demands of decency as to boast in *The First Hundred Million* of the methods he employs to sell his books. The amazing thing is that he seeks to defend his practices after their iniquity has been pointed out to him. He manages his defense badly—as he must, for his weapons are of straw.

There are two points in this editorial which need definite reply. One is the question of depravity. What, after all, is depravity? Mr. Morphy seems to think that any confessed interest in sex is depraved. This is exactly analogous to the question of sin. What is sin? Sin is what a supposedly higher authority says is evil or wicked. This higher authority, with respect to sin, has usually been the church, speaking for God, since God seems unable to be present and speak for himself.

There is a difference between gutter sex and open-and-above-board sex. There are true confession magazines, pep-and-snappy story magazines, and all kinds of books which dispense sex thrills in the guise of moral lessons. They enhance the lure of sex by adding to it the bright colors of forbidden fruit. They do not know how to be frank. Probably Mr. Morphy would condemn their readers as prurient wretches, too.

But it is possible to offer printed information about sex—physiological and psychological information—that is not prurient. The facts of physiology are not pornographic, and surely an interest in *What Every Married Woman Should Know* is not a sign of depravity. What should she know? She should know the facts of biology; she should know something about her physical structure, and what changes her married life may make in her emotional self; she should know what the euphemistic advertisements call the facts of "feminine hygiene." It would seem that she is open to the charge of depravity if she does not wish to know these facts, rather than if she has a desire to inform herself concerning them. And why shouldn't men also be interested in these facts? Marital happiness cannot come without mutual understanding—an understanding that is not merely prettily platonic.

A sex pamphlet has just been suppressed in the enlightened city of New York, which had received the endorsement of physicians, ministers, Y. M. C. A. secretaries, and H. L. Mencken, among others. This pamphlet circulated for years. Then, because of some strange quirk in some reformer's mind, it was barred from the mails. The author, a woman, is now awaiting trial for having sent this "obscene" work through the mails. No doubt Mr. Morphy would approve of this. Yet, which is better, for young people to get their sex knowledge from books of sound physiology, or for them to get luridly distorted knowledge from back-of-the-hand whisperings in dark corners of obscure alleys? People must learn. They must be given a chance to learn—to improve their tastes, to advance their scholarship. Such opportunities are given everyone by the Little Blue Books.

Then Mr. Morphy says that the books most popular in public libraries are books of real merit, and that these popularity-lists refute the statistics cited in *The First Hundred Million*. Mr. Morphy seems to forget that public libraries offer only selected books to the general public. Readers must choose from what the library has. Let a public library put on its open shelves some books of sex information, some discussions of birth control, some agnostic and freethought works, side by side with the "works of real merit" which Mr. Morphy approves, and then see what happens. Perhaps then Mr. Morphy will learn what people earnestly want to inform

themselves about; and perhaps he will begin to realize that they should be allowed to inform themselves.

Anyhow, Mr. Morphy has had his say—and, by the way, speaking of changing "classic" names, one wonders how the good name of Morphy ever became metamorphosed into Morphy (otherwise, whence "Morphy"?—and we can sit back and take another deep breath. E. H.-J. takes the whole thing rather lightly. Smiling blandly he hinted that the way to settle the whole thing would be to run an advertisement in the *Argonaut*, listing the Shakespeare books and the other books which Mr. Morphy dislikes so violently. Let *Argonaut* readers take their pick. E. H.-J. says that they will choose like everyone else; after all, human nature is the same universally.

But the *Argonaut* readers have been primed against buying the books to which their editor objects. They would stuff the ballot-box by buying Shakespeare. A fairer test would be to run the advertisement in any paper which meets with Mr. Morphy's approval, and which will print the two lists of books which he cites in his editorial. Say, the *Christian Herald*, or some such paper of high "moral" standing. The readers must not be warned that a test is being made. They are simply to be given their choice between Shakespeare and Maupassant—between what Mr. Morphy finally admits is a good book and what he condemns as bad.

It would be difficult for Mr. Morphy to find a paper whose readers are not, according to his method of classifying them, predominantly "prurient wretches." Does Mr. Morphy always observe his own Index Expurgatorius—does he never read a book which he feels indicates the reader to be a "prurient wretch"?

If the paper refuses to print the "sex books," that is apparently proof that the paper feels its readers to be potential "prurient wretches," and, therefore, in the interests of common humanity, refuses to let them have a chance to get the sort of thing they crave. Ah, these judges, who set themselves up to determine what is or is not good for their fellow human beings!

This controversy—*The Argonaut* vs. *The First Hundred Million*—has already awakened echoes. Literally from coast to coast indeed, for this most recent diatribe of the *Argonaut* was reprinted in the *Lewiston (Me.) Journal*, with the concluding remark: "So goes the merry war—chiefly about nothing." It seems to be quite readable from the *Lewiston Journal* editorial point of view, however.

Novel Given New Name

The new novel by Mr. and Mrs. Haldeman-Julius, which was published serially in *The American Parade* under the title *Violence*—is to be published in the spring of 1929 by Simon & Schuster, New York. In book form the novel has been given a new name: *Dixie*. It was felt that this name is more expressive of the novel's depiction of life in contemporary southern states—particularly the central southern states. Watch for announcements of the publication of this sensational novel in clothbound form.

Shop Talk

The Kansas City *Star* recently gave George M. Huser's *Crooked Financial Schemes Exposed* (to be Little Blue Book No. 1389) a boost: "Anyone who is tempted to make investments in alluring

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Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas

sophical lectures here. He was a special Professor of Philosophy at Harvard in 1914. His fearless denunciations of the Conscription Act in England during the war created a stir throughout the Empire.

In 1920 he visited Russia and his opinions on the Bolsheviks and the political situation in that country found constant echo in the speeches of David Lloyd George. In 1920-21 he served as Professor of Peking Government University. It was while in this latter position that his articles on the political, social, and economic future of China and the Orient startled the whole world. The official attitude of the government of the world toward China has radically changed since then. Mr. Russell is a prolific writer and his articles appear constantly in our leading magazines. Many of his books have been translated into foreign tongues.

Some of Bertrand Russell's works are: *Problems of Philosophy* (1911); *Mysticism and Logic* (1918); *Roads to Freedom* (1918); *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920); *The Analysis of Matter* (1921).

Announcements of publication dates for Bertrand Russell's exclusive articles will be printed in this paper.

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The Kansas City *Star* recently gave George M. Huser's *Crooked Financial Schemes Exposed* (to be Little Blue Book No. 1389) a boost: "Anyone who is tempted to make investments in alluring

schemes promising quick and huge returns may be saved considerable grief by reading this little book and taking its lessons to heart."

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