

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:

We hear a great deal about the "good old days," even though cynics are inclined to assume that the golden times of the past never really existed. It is difficult to be uncomfortable in the midst of our present achievements and assume that anyone could be happier with less. There is something to say, however, in favor of a simpler way of spending our time. When I was growing up, reading was a very important home activity. We read good books; and by the time a child was eight or nine years old, he was ready for Scott, Thackeray, or Dickens. He might dwell more on the pictures than on the text but could pick out most of the words. A twelve-year-old had quite a vocabulary; and while it might have been somewhat mid-Victorian, the words were nice, pleasantly used, and conveyed an impression of insight. I had quite a fondness for Horatio Alger. There was never an author with so few plots and as many books as Alger, but each volume was overflowing with morality. The heroes were always born in lowly circumstances and rose to great heights by "pluck and luck." The lad of low character was always punished and ultimately saw the errors of his ways. Dissipation was duly frowned upon, and the hero--not infrequently--returned good for evil by befriending the cruel stepparents who had contributed to the miseries of his younger days.

Another acceptable author was G.A. Henty, whom I will always remember with affection. He wrote historical adventure stories, most of them well documented and pleasantly educational. Henty wrote in a mature style, the only difference being that romantic interludes were omitted. I will never forget one of Henty's most interesting stories, *With Clive in India*. It was a thrilling account of the Sepoy Mutiny but included a great deal of East Indian metaphysical lore with an excellent description and interpretation of the mysterious Indian saints and their extrasensory perceptions. For the period in which these books were written, they were surprisingly liberal in their interpretation of world events.

Most families had one of the old-fashioned stereoptic picture viewers, in which you looked through a curious contrivance at photographs consisting of two pictures side by side taken with a special camera. The result was an effect of third dimension. A collection of 100 such pictures was a constant source of delight. The Leaning Tower of Pisa was especially exciting in three-dimension, for it appeared as though it might

topple over, even while you were watching. Gondolas on the canals of Venice, the Coliseum in Rome, and the Tower of London fitted rather well into a reading program which included references to these subjects. A little later, a neighbor--very elderly and therefore regarded with high veneration--acquired one of Edison's old-fashioned talking machines with the sound recorded on cylinders. Everyone in the neighborhood was invited to listen to the strange noises coming from the complicated wooden horn that resembled an Easter lily. At that time, the subject matter was of little interest; it was the miraculous transmission of the spoken word that counted most.

We also had an old upright piano, which Grandmother played as well as a tendency to arthritis would permit. She loved the old songs and occasionally sang the lyrics in a slightly quavering voice. It was very exciting, however, because we lived in a world where small things were wonderful. There was no need to spend money for diversion; the thrill of being alive was all that was necessary. We used to take walks along streets

shaded with old horse chestnut trees. About two blocks from home there was a small drugstore, and across the street a genuine blacksmith's shop. The drugstore had a window displaying huge hanging glass jars filled with water of different colors. There were also rows of bottles with attractive gold and black labels, and in one corner, a jar of leeches for which there was a steady demand. The druggist was a garrulous old gentleman who knew everyone in the community and was usually consulted by those who objected to paying a dollar to visit the doctor. On one occasion, the druggist was distributing perfectly magnificent pictures of celebrated Indian chiefs used to advertise an authentic remedy invented by a Sioux medicine priest. The pictures formed a set, and it required several visits to complete the collection. There was also a fine assortment of farmers' almanacs, with useful hints on numerous subjects. They provided words of wisdom from Benjamin Franklin and Josh Billings and an outstanding recipe for lamb stew sweetened with sorghum.



Of course, preparations for Christmas began as early as mid-summer. There was much to be done, and it was especially important for wayward youngsters to mend their manners if they wished to be remembered at the Christmas season. Grandmother and I always planned our Christmas projects. It was up to me to design appropriate cards for all the relatives, friends, the family doctor, and the minister of our church. The lettering was always a little difficult, but Grandmother helped in her fine old Spencerian hand. In the meantime, she was knitting industriously, making mittens, socks, mufflers, sweaters, and beautifully crocheted earmuffs. She would rock away, describing the Christmas seasons of her own childhood and planning unusual edibles, including cookies, homemade candies, and various preserves.

One of the features of this season was a special church event in which toys were contributed by members of the congregation and distributed among those who could not afford to purchase such luxuries for their children. When the time was right, Grandmother and I inventoried my accumulations. The purpose was to select the proper things to give away. There was no use giving something you did not want yourself. Such an action was

not in the true Christmas spirit. Also, it was expedient to be as generous as possible, and we made a little ritual of selecting some of the choicest belongings likely to bring happiness to others. Grandmother also went through her own possessions to find keepsakes suitable for the occasion.

The chestnut trees provided me with a special opportunity to be creative. By putting several chestnuts together with pins, adding some little wooden legs and painting on faces, I made a number of whimsical animals, birds, and even a fish or two. These were duly admired and were considered appropriate gifts.

By the time my zoological collection was close to completion, winter had come. Weather was severe; we often had from six to eight feet of snow; and hardly had the ground become white before we began to hear the sleigh bells. There were a few automobiles just beginning to appear, but they frightened the horses and were decidedly unpopular. Winter was a very happy occasion, and Thanksgiving was a good prologue for what was to follow. About a week before Christmas, mysterious packages arrived. These were immediately locked up in the hall closet, and no amount of exploration would reveal their contents.

At that time, I had no unreasonable doubts concerning Santa Claus but had already begun to recognize myself as one of his apprentices. Grandmother had a rather good attitude about this. She like to say that Santa Claus was a spirit, and like spirits, he was more real than many of the physical things we see around us. St. Nicholas was the generosity and kindness in our own hearts, and thousands of children thinking about him created an image which was sometimes so clear that you could actually see it. If anyone asked you if there really was a Santa Claus, you could emphatically answer, "Yes!" You may never have seen God, or love, or faith, but these things are real. It is Santa Claus that inspires the people to paint Christmas cards and knit little sweaters and sing carols and carry jars of cookies to the neighbors. All these gentle and thoughtful actions were done because they make us feel better. They help us to experience something of the real meaning of Christmas. It is a season in which we share with those around us, as the universe bestows its blessings on every living creature. This kind of thinking inspired Grandmother to bake a special layer cake for a little woman who was confined to her home by a paraletic stroke. I delivered the cake and included one of my hand-drawn cards. It was a wonderful moment, and we felt something of an unselfish affection not much experienced these later days.

Then came Christmas Day. The mysterious packages were opened; the Christmas tree was lighted; we sang carols; and one of my elderly relatives said Grace in an especially elegant manner. It was rather long, but meaningful, and we all gave thanks together for the peaceful way of life to which we belonged, the blessings of simple security and the wonderful privilege of friendship and affection. We also gave thanks for the Spirit that came to earth in Bethlehem and inspired us all with the dream of universal brotherhood. Everyone went home early, but as Grandmother turned off the gas jets, she would say, "It was wonderful to look forward to, and now, it is a beautiful memory."

Yours very truly,



SPECIAL NOTICE FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional works in future issues.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Price</u>
A to Z Horoscope Maker and Delineator	Llewellyn George	\$ 12.00
Adonis, Attis, Osiris	J.G. Frazer	10.00
The Advancement of Learning	Bacon	2.45
Aion (Vol. II-#9)	Carl G. Jung	10.00
Alchemical Studies (#13)	Carl G. Jung	10.00
All and Everything	Gurdjieff	9.00
Altars of the East	Lew Ayres	4.50
Amulets and Talismans	E.A. Wallis Budge (P)	2.95
Analysis of Handwriting	H.J. Jacoby	6.00
Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice	Carl G. Jung	7.00
Ancient Society	L.H. Morgan (P)	4.00
Ancient Wisdom	Annie Besant	4.00
Anthology of Japanese Literature	D. Keene (Ed.)	4.75
The Apocrypha	E.J. Godspeed (Trans.)	2.45
Apollonius of Tyana	G.R.S. Mead	5.00
Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ	Levi	4.95
Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (9-1)	Carl G. Jung	12.50
Art in the Light of Mystery Wisdom	Rudolf Steiner	3.95
Art of the Ancient Near East	S. Lloyd	7.50
The Art of the Byzantine Empire	Andre Grabar	6.95
Art of Chine, Korea, and Japan	P. Swann	7.50
Art and Creative Unconscious	E. Neuman	3.50
The Art of Driftwood and Dried Arrangements	Tatsuo Ishimoto	3.50
The Art of Synthesis	Alan Leo	7.50
Art of the Renaissance	P. and L. Murray	7.50
The Arts of the Alchemists	C.A. Burland	6.95
The Arts of Japan	Hugo Munsterberg	8.75
Asklepios	Kerenyi	5.00
Astrology, an Historical Examination	P.I.H. Naylor	6.50
Astrology for All	Alan Leo	7.50
Astrological Aspects	C.E.O. Carter	4.00
Astrological Types	Howard Duff	1.50
Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans	Franz Cumont	1.50
Astrology, Your Place among the Stars	Evangline Adams	5.95
The Aurora	Jacob Boehme	7.50
Aurora Consurgens (Aquinas)	Comm. M.L. Von Franz	10.00
The Awakening of Faith	Ashvagoshā	5.00
Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Christianity	Charles Guignebert	10.00
The Art of Buddhism	Dietrich Seckel	6.95
The Art of Chinese Landscape Painting	Anil de Silva	6.95
The Art of Japan	P.C. Swann	6.95
The Art of Japanese Brush Painting	Mikami and McDowell	3.95
The Art of China, Spirit and Society	Werner Speiser	6.95

These books may be ordered directly from the Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on first page). Please add 25¢ for handling on orders of less than \$5.00, and sales tax is to be included by California residents. Note: Prices subject to change.