

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN -- DECEMBER 1966

Dear Friend:

As the Christmas holidays approach, perhaps we may be forgiven if we indulge in a few nostalgic memories. A way of life that is fast vanishing from the world still lingers in the hearts of those who are a little older, and it will not be forgotten while this generation lives.



Because I spent my early childhood in a small community, Christmas, to me, will always be a reminder of snow piled up along the sides of a main street, frost pictures on window panes, and icicles hanging like old-fashioned lace curtains from the eaves of peaked roofs. There were rubber shoes, warm button-coats, and bright red knitted caps pulled well down over the ears. On the winter roads were sleighs with jingling bells, each sleigh drawn by well-blanketed horses with what looked like smoke streaming from their nostrils. The wife of the kindly merchant across the way had knitted a special headgear for the family horse. There were holes on the sides to let the ears through.

On Christmas Eve, there were real candles burning in the windows to welcome the Christ Child and his carol singers, and so far as I can remember, the use of candles on tables or Christmas trees did not result in any dangerous fires. About the worst damage was caused by tallow dripping on the carpet. By strict protocol, the carol singers stopped first at the parsonage of the local clergyman, and then proceeded to the homes of the two physicians, who were friendly rivals. After that, the groups of minstrels visited most of the families in the community, and were frequently invited to come in for a cup of hot tea, and to warm themselves by the stove or open fire.



There were no planned programs to keep the children off the highways, for when there was snow on the ground, the streets and lanes belonged to the young. Accidents were limited to bumped noses or skinned knees, and these were most frequent when there was good skating on the pond at the outskirts of the town.

The first Christmas I clearly remember was in 1903. Two weeks after Thanksgiving, I was stricken with what was called in those days "black pneumonia." Dr. Lapp was our family physician. He was a giant of a man, with a long Prince Albert coat with velvet on the lapels. He had a beard like Edward VII, and smoked a strong cigar, regarded as a protection against contagious diseases. He wore a tall silk hat, somewhat dented by frequent collisions with the tops of door frames. His



practice of medicine was frequently inconvenienced by starched shirt cuffs that were always falling down over his hands at the wrong moment.

There were no wonder drugs in his day, but he had an assortment of pills, powders and syrups in his battered old satchel. He always insisted that hot compresses, the hotter the better, were the sovereign remedy for pneumonia.

The days dragged slowly by, but the fever did not break, and my breathing became more weak and labored. Finally Dr. Lapp drew my mother to one side, and in a low, tired voice announced, "The crisis will be tomorrow, and I must warn you to be prepared for the worst."

"Tomorrow" was Christmas Eve.

The doctor slept on our sofa in the living room that night, and a neighbor put away his horse and buggy. The morning was very bad, and fever blocked out most of my memories. About nightfall, Dr. Lapp, who had been sitting silently by my bed, touched my cheek with his enormous hand. Then he slowly rose to his feet, pulling down his shirt sleeves with the removable cuffs, and said quietly, "He will live."

After a few careful instructions, the physician prepared to leave. Mother helped him on with his coat, and grandmother handed him his silk hat.

When Dr. Lapp had departed, there was a moment of silence, and then mother began to weep softly. Then, catching her breath, she exclaimed: "What shall we do? Tomorrow is Christmas and we have not bought the child even one present!" Grandmother drew herself up to her full height of five-foot two inches, and announced majestically, "I knew he was going to get well; so I slipped down to the store this afternoon and bought the only thing I could find. It is not much, but it will have to do under the conditions."

That night I slept soundly, and when my eyes opened in the morning, the first thing I saw was a stocking of red net hanging on the wall beside my bed. It was bulging with bright-colored toys, and had been pre-packed, probably in Germany, for just such an emergency. Mother took it down and untied the string that held the top together. Removing the toys one by one, she spread them around me. There was a cardboard horn, a shiny tin top that played a tune, a large rubber ball, and a funny little clown that stuck out his tongue when you pressed his stomach.

Also, as a special favor on that Christmas Morning, the great dane was permitted to pay his respects. He was my constant guardian, and it was wonderful to see his big black wet nose beside my pillow. Grandmother went over to the piano and, wiping her eyes on the corner of her apron, played what she could remember of "Silent Night."

Some will say that memories like these are too sentimental, but they belong to a way of life that was rich in quiet securities. There were hours of pain, but moments of great joy. There will always be a special kind of strength in the hearts of those who can remember when kindness extended beyond the call of duty. I hope our children, and their children, can recall someone like Dr. Lapp, trying to rest his huge frame on a spindly Victorian sofa. May they have memories as warm and unforgettable as mine are when I think of the night that grandmother played Santa Claus, and the carol singers, standing in the snow, sang of peace on earth and good will to all men.

May beautiful memories of the past, and wonderful hopes for the future be with you on this sacred occasion.

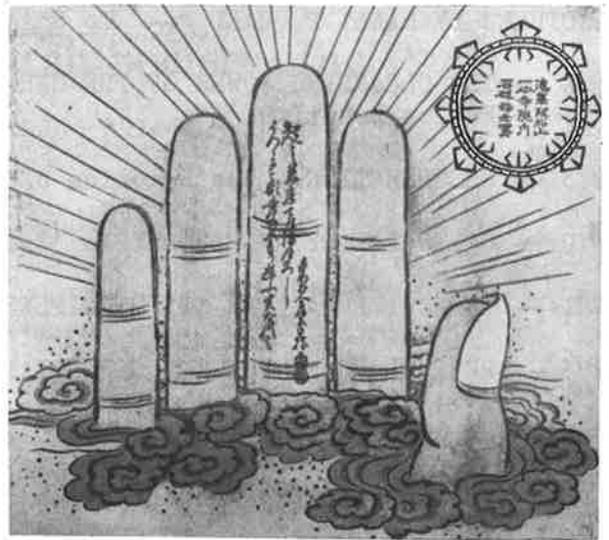
Most sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

AT LONG LAST . . .

BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY is at the binder's, and we should have copies within the next two or three weeks. It has really been quite a project. I have been desirous of preparing such a work for several years, as we receive many requests for a simple, understandable outline of Buddhist philosophy. Most of the available texts are complicated or involved in the teachings of the individual schools.

After my trip to Japan in 1964, the urge to write the book became compelling, and I gathered a considerable amount of research material. On my second trip to Japan, in 1965, I took a good camera, and the idea of unfolding the doctrines and beliefs against the background of sanctuaries and gardens took definite shape.



Appropriately enough, our discussion opens with a visit to the shrine of the Healing Buddha in the suburbs of Nara. Here we are reminded of the basic principles of health as taught in the Northern School of Buddhism. The beliefs are simple, but they are strong and direct. There is no place for compromise or the evasion of ethical and moral responsibility. Health must be earned by a life made beautiful through communion with art and nature, wise through study and meditation, and physically secure through natural, normal and constructive activities.

It is not the intent of the book to convert anyone to Buddhism, but rather to suggest ways of self-culture appropriate for the followers of any religion, or for those who prefer to develop their faith from within their own minds and hearts. Health, like happiness, is made up of many elements that unite to form one redeeming force. This has been further suggested by a discussion of simple religious practices of the people, and the wonderful care with which they protect the natural beauties of their country.



In this book, there is something of pilgrimage -- flights of old worn stone steps, red arches against a background of great trees. There are wise Zen monks, and little turtles that already possess within themselves freedom from the obsessions that afflict mankind. I hope that this book will convey a degree of insight without losing the simplicity of the people who work in rice fields and shops and stores, but who, like ourselves, must preserve their inner serenity against the intrusions of efficiency, freeways, and transistor factories.

Many of the pictures were taken in quiet places made sacred by centuries of veneration. We hope that they will contribute a sense of inner quietude and remind the reader that in a changing world, the hearts of men must remain true to the unchanging realities upon which our hopes are intuitively founded.

-- Manly P. Hall

The book is scheduled for delivery in early January, but we hope to have copies available for local delivery before Christmas. Orders may be placed immediately, and will be filled as soon as possible.

BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY will be a handsome volume of 324 pages, with 70 illustrations. Bound in full cloth, stamped in gold, with an attractive dust jacket.

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*Merry Christmas
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