

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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MUSINGS OF MPH

DEAR FRIENDS:



HAVING REACHED THE ANECDOTAGE AGE it may be of interest to some to reflect upon some of the circumstances which contributed to the development of my life work. My projects were strongly influenced by the social changes which have occurred in the last sixty years. In 1919 I "Retired!" from the insurance business and other Wall Street involvements. My relatives in the East were convinced that

I was making a serious mistake. If I had chosen to remain in the business world, my career would have been useful and practical with reasonable expectations for promotion. And when I reached retirement age the company would have rewarded me with a handsome grandfather's clock with a brass plaque testifying to many years of faithful service. I could also have dropped in at the firm to congratulate my successor and maintain old friendships. Just before I left, the head bookkeeper had died at his desk, having worn out three layers of carpetry under his chair.

Not long after reaching Los Angeles I wrote and published my first literary endeavor, a small pamphlet entitled THE BREAST PLATE OF THE HIGH PRIEST. This has long been out of print but was reissued in Volume III of our original magazine THE ALL SEEING EYE. Soon after this landmark passed out of print, I became associated with the Church of the People. The former pastor, Mr. Reynold E. Blight, a prominent accountant who retired due to emergencies in his personal life, left unexpectedly. The Church of the People held its Sunday morning services at Blanchard Hall. The congregation numbered approximately eight hundred rugged individuals. Most of them were free thinkers inspired by the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Donnelly and Bellamy. Mr. Blight, however, had turned their attention to comparative religion, and I built upon the foundation which he had laid down. At that time an independent liberal known as "Freedom Hill Henry" assembled his followers under the motto "It takes a crank to make the world go round." These were strange and wonderful years. World War I had ended and the country had settled down to an uneasy peace. Profiteering was rampant in the land, but far more significant was the Freudian crisis. His psychology of sex spread rapidly and invaded the metaphysical field. It was represented in this country by self-appointed exponents who mingled its doctrines with the stream of positive thinking and the popular concepts of peace, power and plenty. One exponent developed a technique of pressing the chest against the vest buttons while meditating on the theme of personal prosperity.

In those happy days, the science of nutrition began to disturb the eating habits of millions of Americans. In one instance I remember, an evangelist of longevity arrived at one of our larger auditoriums right behind several truck-loads of garden stuff. A group of decorators went immediately to work and soon the front of the lecture hall where the apostle to the gourmands was to speak was artistically festooned with strings of cabbages, bunches of onions, bouquets of radishes and bunches of humble carrots. The day that the spinach was first draped about the pillars and arches of the auditorium, it formed a verdant if unusual decoration. The second day, however, the spinach had a wilted look and by the third day the deterioration was horribly obvious. The prophet of food values was equipped with numerous small packages of herbs and simples which were on sale in the lobby and the free lecture publicized an intensive course of special instructions at a more or less modest fee. Although the speaker's knowledge was rather sketchy, it was enthusiastically received and helped to create a market which has never subsided.

The idea of religious communities began to intrigue the public mind even in those days. Metaphysics became involved in some unusual real estate transactions. The spiritual minded were invited to seek consolation by acquiring home sites far from the maddening throng. One enterprising mystic announced that he had arranged to create a utopian village in Mexico with the cooperation of the government. Many good-hearted escapists invested their life savings in the venture. It later turned out that the promoter did not own a square foot of land in the Republic of Mexico and that the government of our sister republic had never heard of the project. One elderly woman lost her entire life savings, told me her sad story, but concluded with the remark that she did not believe that any dishonesty was intended. In any event, the organizer of the scheme went out of circulation for several years.

Looking back over those days, it becomes obvious that human nature has not greatly changed. Most persons were plagued with marital difficulties, health problems and a hope for instantaneous wealth. They flocked to anyone who would promise something for nothing. The concept which became prevalent was simple and extremely attractive. God wanted all of his children to have everything with as little effort as possible. Faith in infinite abundance and divine benevolence undoubtedly certainly had some constructive results. The secret of it all was Coue's famous slogan, "Day by day in every way, I am getting better and better." It should be remembered that there were very few trained psychologists or psychotherapists. The science of nutrition was still in its infancy and temptations to extravagance were fewer than at the present time. Several bona fide organizations in the field of esoteric philosophy remained aloof from the prosperity-dominated groups and protected most of their following from pernicious beliefs. The tax system was far more liberal than it is today. Those claiming to be religion oriented declined to make their incomes known for tax purposes. One eminently successful metaphysician when asked to give a tax accounting answered that the amount of his income was only known to God and himself.

The wave of prosperity-thinking came to an abrupt end with the depression of 1929. It became painfully obvious that an era of superficial thinking had come to a tragic end. The glamorous exponents of the get-rich-quick ideology, rapidly faded away. Some left the country with comfortable fortunes and others simply retired into private life and were quickly forgotten. The victims, considerably sobered, sought to restore their depleted bank accounts but only a few succeeded. Occasionally in old book stores, we find books and

pamphlets authored during the Roaring Twenties. Gradually the field of religious idealism regained a dignified place in the sphere of progressive thinking. Some returned to the orthodox churches with a deeper understanding of individual integrity. As the years went by, educational institutions became more liberal and trained nutritionists researched the mysteries of food chemistry. Mystics were still in the minority but their viewpoints were respected. The rise of materialistic science, however, brought with it the old troubles under a new name. It is no longer deity that preaches prosperity, but science and industry with its emphasis upon luxury living. We are told every day that the principle purpose of life is to spend money. Temptations have multiplied many times over from those of the Roaring Twenties. The new gospel advises us to spend all we can before the world goes into bankruptcy. Do not save for a rainy day, but when the storm breaks, go on welfare. The faith that was once directed to the benevolence of providence is now vested in the inflationary trend and we are hoarding gold and diamonds instead of groceries.

Between 1921 and '28 I was hard at work writing my large volume on symbolical philosophy. During this same period, I began lecturing in San Francisco and returned there periodically for nearly fifty years. My first lecture was given in the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple and the management felt that I should have some type of formal introduction in the Bay area. On the opening night the superintendent of the building appeared in a Prince Albert coat with striped trousers and spats. He held in one hand his white gloves and in the other a tall silk hat. He was most impressive and I, being still of tender years, was completely overwhelmed. In those good old times, the auditorium rent was fifteen dollars a night. Substantial ads could be placed in the main newspapers at no great expense and a good hotel room, with bath, was two dollars. This was fortunate as I depended upon free-will offerings to cover my expenses. One sheepish-looking old gentleman came up to me after one of these lectures and, with hesitation, told me that he had intended to put ten cents in the collection plate, but had dropped a quarter instead and would I mind giving him fifteen cents change. Small occasions like this are remembered long after more significant occurrences have been forgotten.

Space is running out, so I must continue my musings in the next bulletin. Part of this will be devoted to travelling and will focus on the years between 1931 and 1940 when many interesting things happened. In the meantime, I remain

Most sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

We take this opportunity to thank all the good friends who contributed books to the Library's First Annual Book Sale. It was a most successful event with over a thousand volumes contributed, some of which found their way into the Library as part of our permanent collection. A portion of the money raised by this sale will be used to add needed textbooks to our collection and to rebind a number of rare works which are showing need of immediate repair. Our Librarian, Pearl Thomas, is already being asked when the next book sale will take place. No fixed date has been set, but it is planned for the early spring of 1980. Donations of books for the Second Annual PRS Book Sale will be accepted at the PRS Library throughout the year and can either be brought to the Library, mailed to the Library at the reduced fourth class book rate, or sent via U.P.S. Memberships can also be requested anytime during the year at \$1.00. Charter memberships are \$50.00. Both donations of books and the memberships are income tax deductible. Again--thank you for your wonderful response.

In a previous Contributors' Bulletin we announced that we were sending a small pamphlet for those interested in the perpetuation of our activities. We hope you will find it possible to take advantage of some of the suggestions mentioned in the enclosed booklet, ESTATE PLANNING. The publication is accurate and contains the latest available information for those who wish to further the work of non-profit corporations. We are most grateful for your help and support through the years and believe this information will assist you in finding a way to continue to support a cause that is close to your heart.