

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Manly P. Hall, President and Founder

Patricia C. Ervin, Vice President

CONTRIBUTOR'S BULLETIN - February 1983

GRANDMOTHER HAD CERTAIN FIXED OPINIONS



GREETINGS:



s noted in a previous letter, Grandmother was born and raised in Haverhill, Massachusetts. In those days it was a quiet, gentle, and conservative community with its own standards of respectability. Grandmother's mother was a lady of good parts with a firm chin and adamant respectability. She dominated a well regulated household, and Thursday was "darning day." The gentle folks of Haverhill--man, woman, girl, and boy--wore long, black, cotton stockings with occasional wool for winter. It was quite a chore to harness a buggy for short trips and walking was popular. This inevitably resulted in the stockings developing holes in toes and heels and an occasional run further up. No one in her right mind would throw away good stockings if they could be mended, and Thursday was the day set aside to darning.

A stocking with a hole in it was a disgrace, but well mended it was a symbol of gentility, thoughtfulness, economy, and the proper preservation of natural resources. When Grandmother was five or six years old, she used to sit quietly on a footstool and watch her mother darning stockings. A darning ball was essential, otherwise the repairs might prove uncomfortable. In the course of time my Grandmother herself became an apprentice darning and, when about eight years of age, she graduated with honors and was given her own needle, thread, thimble, and darning ball, together with moral instruction on the subject.

The lessons of childhood lingered on and Grandmother was convinced that human beings were created to be useful, and that those who enjoyed daily work had the greatest chance to be happy. I remember one day when I was supposed to be too young to benefit from the discussions of my elders, Grandmother was pouring tea for a rather dejected neighbor. After detailing her complaints, she heaved a heavy sigh, lifted her head resolutely, and said, "I have one consolation. I did my duty." For Grandmother, those were fighting words. In her best Haverhill manner she announced, "There are no duties--there are only privileges. And there are no responsibilities--only opportunities." This was her way throughout her life. She was never happier than when involved in a constructive enterprise.

In many ways Grandmother contributed to my philosophy of life. She believed sincerely that ordinary daily living was always enjoyable unless a person ruined it by his own complaints. To do nothing was never a reward but a heavy penalty upon the spirit. When she was a young mother, my Grandfather thought she should have a housekeeper who retired after about six months because inertia

was killing her. Grandmother insisted upon doing everything herself--not because she was supposed to, but because she wanted to. I remember once a few years before her death she was cleaning her living room. After looking around, she got out her old carpet sweeper, but there was no dirt on the rug; so she opened the sweeper, spilled out some of its contents, and happily swept it up.

Grandmother was not so much for theology--but I am sure that if she found herself in a pleasant afterlife, there would still be little things to do. All the virtues which we carefully cultivate and usually fail to apply seemed hypocritical to Grandmother. Why should people pray to be good, try to be pleasant, and pray for protection against sin? We have created a strange dichotomy. We have divided attitudes and interests into things we want to do and things we have to do. To Grandmother they were the same thing. Though never a metaphysician, she believed firmly in the power of constructive thinking. Occasionally, she slipped a little and was ashamed of herself for a few minutes. If anyone had asked her why we were born into this vale of tears, she would certainly have replied, "We are here to have fun." She was never rich, but it never bothered her because too many possessions and too much ambition seriously interfered with enjoyment in living. She believed that no one was ever too poor or too rich to be useful and those who were not useful cultivate all types of morbid behavior.

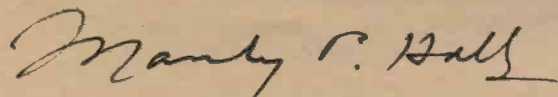
What is the difference between a duty and a privilege? Both are invitations to effort. If something needs doing, it is an opportunity to grow, to learn, to serve, and to share. Anyone who considers such activities to be objectionable is frustrating the best part of his own nature. By the same philosophy, responsibility is an opportunity to discover more of our own inner strengths. We should never fear change, but rejoice that it adds variety to mortal existence. Grandmother often wondered why we were put here in the first place. She was not much satisfied by prevailing theories on the subject. It seemed to her that it had something to do with the proper use of the attitudes and abilities with which we are endowed. After thinking it through quietly, she decided that the more we try to be happy by artificial means, the more miserable we become. Happiness is a birthright. We cannot add to it because it is completely sufficient to itself, but we can find a number of ways of damaging this sacred heritage. If we are sorry for ourselves, we betray the good and beauty in our own hearts. After developing all kinds of antagonisms and antipathies, we have little left but duties and responsibilities. To escape these, we cultivate bad habits and fall victim to escape mechanisms.

Grandmother did not have an easy life. A number of persons were sorry for her but, thank heaven, she never found it out. The good lady was never involved in the suffrage movement. During World War I, Grandmother and I were living in Washington, D.C., while Emmeline Pankhurst was touring the United States. Grandmother sympathized with the suffrage movement, but never quite understood it. She never experienced subordination of any kind. She knew no obstacles. For her, the Red Sea always opened when she wanted to pass through. If people would just learn to enjoy being gracious and friendly, there would be no need for heavy legislation, street demonstrations, or ill feelings between nations. The good things in life have not been achieved through legislation. You make good laws, but unhappy and uncomfortable people break them because they have never experienced how good it feels to be useful and unselfish.

Unfortunately, there was one lesson that Grandmother was never able to teach me successfully--and that was darning. I really tried it, and I still have a little sewing kit that she carried with her all over Europe. At last I decided that, at all costs, I would make something for Grandmother. I settled on a doily which I hand-embroidered with strawberries. The like of this doily had never been seen before and it will not be seen again. I suspect that Grandmother felt it her duty to be duly appreciative. To prove conclusively that she considered a right attitude to be a privilege under the circumstances, she not only kept the doily but placed it on the tray when she served tea. By some strange circumstance, however, it ultimately disappeared.

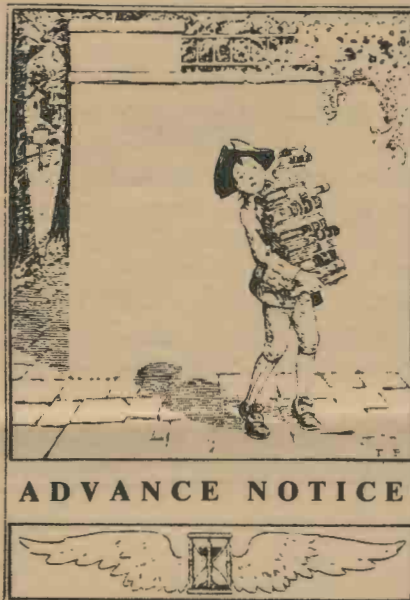
I am not sure how Grandmother would feel if she could read the letters I have written about her recently. It would give her further opportunity to sustain with quiet dignity my estimation of her character. If my efforts did not add to her happiness, they would certainly be amusing. She would face my efforts as she did every other emergency in life as a test of her philosophy of life. She was a wonderful person.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manly P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

MANLY P. HALL

We have learned that friends in Latin America have incorporated the University of the Soul to disseminate idealistic philosophies. The address of the organization is Apartado Aereo No. 2577, Barranquilla, Colombia, South America. We wish them well and invite interested persons to communicate directly with the group.



## PRS LIBRARY BOOK SALE

April 23, Saturday / 9:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

April 24, Sunday / 9:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

This sale presents an opportunity to dispose of surplus books which could be helpful to others.

Manly P. Hall personally goes through all the books that come in for the Book Sale. Some are saved for the PRS Library, some will be sold, and some interesting duplications will be put up for auction. We have a copy of *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* from the original printings of 1928 in good to fair condition; the binding shows signs of wear but the text is in excellent condition. Mail order bids may be submitted. The retail price on this volume, when available, is approximately \$750.

This is our one sale of the year and every cent is used for the Philosophical Research Society—in the library, the auditorium, or for helping to defray expenses in the landscaping of the premises.

We are asking for your help. At the same time, you may very well be helping yourself to clear space for other things—like more books from the April Book Sale.

Bring books at any time. Contact Pearl Thomas for further information at 663-2167.