

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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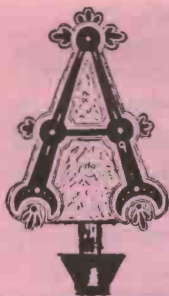
CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN

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NOSTALGIA

Dear Friends,



At the Christmas season, one has a tendency to revive memories of childhood. When this happens to me, it is inevitable that I should recall my venerated Grandmother. Time has not dimmed her image. Many happenings have faded into limbo, but her image has never needed polishing. The holy season recalled to mind incidents from her own childhood which were seldom mentioned at other seasons. Grandmother's memories were a priceless heritage, and sustained her principles to the day she died. Most of us adapt our attitudes to the pressures of the moment, but not Florence Louise Worthing.

Her principles and policies were established in infancy, and it never occurred to her that they would ever need revision. She knew exactly what to do about everything, and I never saw her flustered on any occasion or at loss for appropriate remarks. She was the embodiment of a way of life that was slowly fading out around her, but never interfered with Grandmother's code of culture. For a simple example: she would never leave her rooms without her gloves. They were always of black leather, tight fitting, and with just enough space so that they would cover her engagement and wedding rings. I never saw a picture of Grandmother in her younger years, but I am sure she was also very particular about her shoes. She was firmly convinced that they were intended for walking and any footwear that was uncomfortable should never be worn. She also favored black with sturdy heels and plenty of space for the toes. She also kept on hand a package of Allen's Footease. This preparation came in small envelopes and may have contained a little alum. She always considered button shoes beneath her dignity, in addition to being a nuisance.

She was quite particular about her hands and, whenever she cut her fingernails, she often gave mine the once-over, but nail polish--never. If one of her acquaintances wore her nails too long or polished them, it was almost certain that Grandmother would terminate the acquaintance. As far as I can remember, she never carried a handbag, and all her clothing was equipped with appropriate pockets. There was one in her white starched shirtwaist which bulged with a serious-sized handkerchief. There were two or three in her overcoat, and at least one in her black broadcloth skirt. These bulged occasionally, but, after all, they were not made for decoration.

It is doubtful if Grandmother ever owned an evening gown, fancy jewelry, earrings, or combs with rhinestones set in. She learned young that she could make an

impressive entry without affectations of any kind. If guests were chatting, smiling, or fanning themselves with fashionable accessories, Grandmother entered all in black with her bonnet and her taffeta coat, and silence immediately set in. She was expert in capitalizing on her widow's weeds and they never failed to be met with appropriate respect.

Grandmother had very little admiration for progress. She never surrendered to prevailing styles, and told me on several occasions that she was grateful that she would not be alive when styles destroyed civilization. She was shrewd enough to realize that the profit system would corrupt human morals. When this happened, all the graces with which humanity had been endowed would corrupt good morals and lead to universal vulgarity.

She confided in me that her respect for the American Indians was considerably diminished when she learned that they were responsible for the use of tobacco. Men who insisted on smoking should retire to some uninhabited part of the house. She had no scientific knowledge relating to the dangers of smoking, but it contributed to degeneracy. She lived long enough to see a few women smoking, but passed on shortly after--possibly the shock was too great for her.

In her older years, Grandmother had an ebony walking stick with a silver knob on the top. I never noticed that she depended very heavily upon her cane, but definitely considered that it was appropriate to her age. She also had a small black parasol with a lace fringe. When it was opened, the umbrella part could be tipped in various directions to meet the angle of the sun's rays. When she rode in a victoria with pair, sporting the parasol, she was the very embodiment of consequence. At that time Festus was the coachman and Grandmother waved her gloved hand majestically at passing acquaintances. At one time, she thought I should ride a bicycle. We went over to Central Park with Grandmother riding in a pony cart, handling the reins herself, and still wearing the gloves, and with me wobbling along behind on the bicycle. Naturally, I took several bad falls and the experiment noted down as a complete failure. Grandmother was not worried so much about my possible bruises, but damage to my best suit was a serious concern.

I will never forget the quiet evenings that Grandmother and I spent together. It seemed that every day ended with a blessing. In the beginning, she read to me, usually from one of her favorite poets, and later I read to her from the abundant juvenile literature popular in those days. In the soft glow of a table lamp, she got out her mending, taking care of darning, patching, and reinforcing the ravages of wear and tear. Her ingenuity was often taxed by the problem of adjusting the clothes of a growing boy who finally outgrew nearly everything. When her chores were finished, she got out her knitting and made sweaters for two little granddaughters. There was also embroidery and, if the spirit moved her, she got out a little velvet pillow and wove a few inches of lace.

Grandmother belonged to the Benjamin Franklin School of thought, and frequently quoted his opinions on thrift and the proper use of time. She often explained to me that those who waste time are always in a hurry and, when one is in a hurry, he always wastes time. It is fortunate that she never lived to face the dangers of radio and television. These noisy appliances would have ruined her quiet evenings and she might well have led a crusade against them.

Grandmother had mixed memories regarding her late husband. She never forgave him for smoking strong and expensive cigars. Heaven was on her side, and eventually the family physician warned him that he must give up smoking. He then took up hard candy of the type long favored by children. After explaining these circumstances to me, her face broke into a gentle smile and she murmured softly, "After all, the poor man had to do something, and he usually took the candy bag with him to the office."

From her ancestors in Haverhill, Massachusetts, she had inherited her philosophy of life. It was not good to be wealthy because the more money you had, the more time you would waste. Never select your friends from those whose only asset is affability. She saw no reason why Mrs. Astor should not cook her own meals or why the Vanderbilts had nursemaids for their children. When you pay people to do your work for you, you lose the God-given right to learn the simple realities of living. You may not be able to change people who are wasting their lives, but there is no need to join them. It is far better to sit quietly at home with a sense of personal integrity.

To summarize the present memories I should note that Grandmother was an experienced letter writer. She used every possible opportunity to prove that she remembered not only birthdays and the holy seasons, but she nearly always mentioned some incident in which the recipient of the note had been especially thoughtful. Grandmother wrote a fine Spencerian hand and the letter would travel anywhere in the United States for two cents. There were giants on the earth in those days, and Grandmother was one of them.

Most sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

MANLY P. HALL



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PRS LIBRARY BOOK SALE

March 10, Saturday / 9:30 A.M.-4:00 P.M.
March 11, 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 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 March Book Sale.

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