VOLUME V, NO. 14
APRIL 2, 1952

TRUE CONFESSIONS

EVER since modern psychology, following David Hume, abolished the idea of the self, the question of how human beings "know," or think they know, has received very little attention. Study of the processes of consciousness has been pursued only haphazardly by individuals, as an almost clandestine undertaking. For example, there is the circuit court justice, Joseph C. Hutcheson, Jr., who some years ago declared in the *Cornell Law Review*—

> I set down boldly that I, "even as your other worships do," invoke and employ hunches in decisions.
>
> I, after canvassing all the available material at my command, and duly cogitating upon it, give my imagination play and, brooding over cause, wait for the feeling, the hunch—that intuitive flash of understanding which makes the jump spark connection between question and decision.
>
> And more, "lest I be stoned in the street" for this admission, let me hasten to say to my brothers of the bench and of the bar, "My practice is the same as your other worships."

The air of daring which accompanies this admission is sufficient evidence of the conspiracy of silence against the idea of "intuition"—against even a recognition that not merely judges, but practically all human beings arrive at decisions in much the same way. In the first place, to invoke "hunches" or "intuitions" is both unscientific and undemocratic. Intuitions are unscientific in that they part with the sober processes of gathering and weighing facts. They defy the additive process of accumulating information until, as some authoritarian of the scientific method has insisted, the "justly arranged" facts "interpret themselves." They are undemocratic in that they involve some mental alchemy which has no precise explanation in terms of cause and effect, allowing the fortunate "intuitive few" among us to set themselves apart as an elite.

For both scientific and political reasons, then, the intuition has been neglected as a subject for study; and, inasmuch as the intuition is decisive in so many human choices, we have very little reliable information on the origins of original opinion.

Of the origins of unoriginal opinion, we know a great deal. Researches into the influence of propaganda have made discouragingly clear the extent to which human beings are the "products of their times." The power of "conditioning" often seems immeasurable, and were it not for the existence of minorities and dissenters to every orthodoxy, the conclusion that there is *no* original thinking would be difficult to escape. Not only political and social attitudes result from conditioning. There is reason to think that the philosophical principles of presumably educated men are often little more than "rationalizations" of temperamental outlook, by no means the result of prolonged reflection and impartial choice. An investigation into the "philosophical" views of schoolchildren in Norway produced the following learned interpretation of the serious opinions of their elders: "Opinions on philosophical and metaphysical subjects (e.g. truth theories) can be conceived as retained pubertic formulations remodelled and deepened under the influence of formulations transmitted by tradition." (Arne Ness, *"Truth" as Conceived by those who Are not Professional Philosophers*, Oslo, 1939.)

New evidence of the heavy hand of both nature and nurture upon the young is always depressing to educators. And as we know so much more about the transmission of conditionings, of prejudices, about rationalizations and emotional confinements of the mind, than we do about thinking which may justly be called *free*, the ground for discouragement has become much larger than the ground for hope. The only actual escape from complete depression that is recognized, today, educationally speaking, is through theories about *method* in thinking. Out of a blunt, empirical demand for freedom in thought, because we *feel* free, and because life becomes intolerable

unless we try to act *as if* we are free, we forge the spirit of freedom of inquiry, despite all the discouragements of psychological and sociological research. (We speak here, of course, of those for whom psychological and sociological research has seemed important, and not of the great majority—those who go through life undismayed by "research" of any sort, either because they have not heard of it, or because it seems unreal and impractical.)

It should be possible, however, for us to know a little more about our "freedom" and our "creative thinking" than is permitted by a bare admission of the possibility of both. And, as usual, it is the "practical" men who have taken the first steps in this direction. In the *American Magazine* for December, 1945, C. G. Suits, chief of the research division of General Electric, tells of the course in "creative engineering" which has been instituted by this company for the benefit of its promising young staff inventors. Suits and his colleagues noticed that so many important inventions "were born of flashes of intuition" that they felt there must be some definite "law" of discovery. Accordingly, they made a theory to account for these rather wonderful happenings:

> Whatever explanation you prefer {Suits writes}, it's fair to say that intuition *behaves as though it were* the result of one's own mental resources operating in the shadowy expanse outside the spotlight of his conscious mind. The fresh patterns we call hunches invariably are formed first in the subconscious, apparently because our consciousness tends to bolt the door against the new and strange. One creative worker in our laboratory compares a hunch to unborn ideas scurrying around in his brain, like birds inside a cage. Every now and then one of them finds an unguarded exit and flutters through into his conscious mind.
>
> Most of us probably live all our lives surrounded by great discoveries which we fail to see. Intuition rings the bell, but we don't bother to answer. Therein lies the great difference between the ordinary mortal and the man of genius. The genius is at home to new ideas. His conscious mind is freely open to these subconscious promptings. He's not held down by the dead weight of tradition. . . .

You may not like the bird-cage theory of genius, but it is at least as useful as Lewis M. Terman's longish announcement of the impossibility of finding out much of anything on the subject. In his four-volume study, *Genetic Studies of Genius,* Dr. Terman tells us that "native differences in endowment are a universal phenomenon, and that it is impossible to evaluate them" (I, vii); that "To what extent genius can be created or destroyed by right or wrong training is entirely unknown" (I, viii); that there is "no data revealing laws by which superior mental ability is transmitted" (I, 339); that environment does not explain "early precocity" (I, 634-5); and that we have no knowledge of whether genius is hereditary or environmental in origin (I, 639, III, 5, 455-6).

From Mr. Suits, however, we have the word of inventors themselves—who are the closest thing to genius we have in captivity. According to these creative workers, "Hard work invariably precedes the flash of inspiration." On the question of what, precisely, "intuition" is, the answers are intriguingly various. One engineer "insists that intuition is an awareness of Absolute Truth—a sort of spiritual receiving set that permits its owner to tune in broadcasts of universal knowledge." A famous aircraft designer, doubtless Sikorsky, is quoted as regarding intuition as "a new sixth sense, enabling its fortunate possessor to see ahead in time and become aware of future events long before they happen" One scientist feels the presence of a "guardian angel" who whispers advice and prevents mistakes, while a prominent chemist "gets the impression that unseen hands are guiding his operations."

Imagine this sort of thing being considered by modern scientists, anywhere outside of case studies of abnormal psychology!

Plato, however, whose views on practically anything are worth looking into, offers substantial confirmation of the General Electric geniuses. Writing in his *Seventh Epistle* on the arousal of the mind to spiritual knowledge, he said: "Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself, and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining."

The importance of this inquiry is not in the hope that we may be able to draw up diagrams of the intuitive process, but rather that we may begin to come to terms with the facts of our cognitive life. Why not a little more candor as to the intangible considerations on which our opinions are based? This is an age of revaluation and spreading heresy, but the actual harvest from rapid change in climates of opinion is bound to be small unless we learn to take a more realistic view of how our minds work and where we get our convictions. Scientists never tire of telling us that no experiment is worth much of anything unless it is *controlled*—unless we can stand off from the reactions and compare them with some norm or criterion. This is precisely what does *not* happen when men swing from one extreme of opinion to another, at each end claiming that now, at last, they have the final irrefutable Truth.

What we should like to suggest is that you can have no really successful theory of conditioning without a corresponding and prior theory of what is affected by the conditioning. What, in short, is *man*, who is affected by these changing influences of social, moral, and ideological environment? Is he no more than a bit of malleable clay which bares its unresisting surface to the pressures of time and circumstance? Or is he a self, a conscious, sensitive unity—a *being* of whom we may gain more knowledge than we presently possess?

When David Hume concluded, some two hundred years ago, that "mankind . . . are nothing but a bundle of perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement," he laid the foundation-stone of the prevailing philosophy and psychology since his time. Hume's famous passage attempting to refute the idealists who claim to be aware of "the self" has been endlessly quoted as the last word in triumphant negation of metaphysics. Not so frequently referred to, however, is his back-stage admission of uneasiness on the matter:

> Upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth, that I must confess I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent. . . . All my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory which gives me satisfaction on this head.

Hume himself was honest enough to set down his bewilderments, while the modern skeptics—denial of self having become a well-established orthodoxy—seem to conceal even from themselves the difficulties which became obvious to Hume. The "I" of our consciousness is indeed the primary fact of our existence, and if this fact is neglected by science, our science is simply fragmentary, and bound by the anti-theological prejudices of its intellectual progenitors.

We want no new orthodox theory of self to fill the void in our thinking about ourselves—no *one* theory, at any rate, but rather a multitude, a spate of guesses, speculations, and "hunches" on the subject, for this, it seems to us, would release incalculable intellectual and moral energies among the men of our time. The "bird-cage" theory, for example, while only a crude analogy, at least makes contact with the realities of subjective experience. And simply because there is no body of speculation or literature concerning the self, it has become one of the unmentionables of modern thought. No reflective man will deny that he has often restrained himself from expression of vague feelings about essential being, simply for fear of being laughed at, or blasted by some acidulous spokesman of the current outlook. Yet such reticence is seriously stultifying. Consider that our science of human behavior, conformably with the canons of scientific method, is entirely deterministic, while our behavior itself—even the behavior of scientists who teach Determinism—is filled with conscious purposes. In practice, this works out a little as did the theory of Double Truth during the late Middle Ages—officially they accept Determinism, but in their private lives they are engagingly free, and even indignant when some other "free agent" does things of which they heartily disapprove. The only eminent man we know of who was actually consistent in his Determinism was Clarence Darrow, who never condemned or blamed anyone for anything, although he did become vastly

irritated with the judge on the bench in the Scopes trial.

The point of all this is that it is important to admit that we think of ourselves as self-conscious units, and to take this fact into serious consideration when we talk about man, what he is, what he may become. The silence of theory on this subject is depressing in the extreme, for it leaves the field open for "scientific" manipulation of human beings as though they were no more than robots to be switched and radared around by direct or remote control.

The question now arises: Can there be a *cultivation* of the inward sense, of intuition or the creative faculty? This question is dangerous to raise, for almost any answer except an outright rejection of the possibility could lead to the wildest of pretensions. Consider, for example, the conclusions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who gave as much reflection to this problem as any writer in the English language. He said in the twelfth chapter of his *Biographia Literaria:*

> . . . philosophy cannot be intelligible to all, even of the most learned and cultivated classes. A system, the first principle of which is to render the mind intuitive of the spiritual man *(i.e.* of that which lies *on the other side* of our natural consciousness) must needs have a great obscurity for those, who have never disciplined and strengthened this ulterior consciousness. It must in truth be a land of darkness, a perfect *Anti-Goshen,* for men to whom the noblest treasures of their own being are reported only through imperfect translation of lifeless and sightless motions.... The medium, by which spirits understand each other, is not the surrounding air; but the *freedom* which they possess in common, as the common ethereal element of their being, the tremulous reciprocations of which propagate themselves even to the inmost of the soul. Where the spirit of man is not *filled* with the consciousness of freedom (were it only from restlessness, as one struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself. No wonder, then, that he remains incomprehensible to himself as well as to others. . . .

Now comes what could be termed an ominous "racist" doctrine, dividing the species of philosophers:

> One man's consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms and quantity; a third in addition to the image is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to a notion of his notions—he reflects on his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety, that the one possesses more or less inner sense, than the other. This more or less betrays already, that philosophy in its first principles must have a practical or moral, as well as a theoretical or speculative side. . . .So is there many a one among us, yes, and some who think themselves philosophers, too, to whom the philosophic organ is entirely wanting. To such a man philosophy is a mere play of words and notions, like a theory of music to the deaf, or like the geometry of light to the blind. . . .

We have the notion that Coleridge is right—that a philosophic "organ" exists, and that it is capable of development. We think, further, that the banning of this notion from popular discussion on democratic grounds has in fact led to the widespread attack on the moral individual, here, in the United States, in some measure, and to a greater extent in non-democratic countries. Hatred of the idea of individual distinction produced the "revolt of the masses," which Ortega prophesied even while it was taking place.

Which will you have, the dogma of equality and a bureau of commissars to see that "equality" is enforced, or the admission of difference, and the charge of responsibility to those who are different because of distinction?

And if you choose distinction, how will you define it and recognize it, in order to escape the rule of a breed of "philosopher-kings" who claim to have enough "intuition" to take care of all of us, whether we like it or not?

There is no escape, we think, from these dilemmas. No escape, that is, except through maintaining the subtle tensions that thoughts and acts of freedom introduce among a society of men—the austerities of *culture* in the best sense of this term, and the constant refreshment and renewal of the idea of culture by giving free scope to all inquiring minds.

Letter from **SWEDEN**

GOTHENBURG.—When Charles Lindberg, in May, 1997, landed on Bourget Field, France, he made a remarkable declaration when he said, "Well, we made it."

The word "we" is perhaps a common enough utterance among people in general, but it is common to Swedes in particular. This correspondent remembers from childhood days that the children always said "our" house, "our" backyard, or "our" school. We begin in childhood to feel collective and work collectively. This is the connection between capital and the worker, here.

The workers employed by the shipyard of Gotaverken or that of Eriksberg are proud of their firms, the shipyards, the products. Often one hears debates and disputes among the workers as to which enterprise will turn out the best job, and which of them works the best way. When not long ago a new pulp mill was erected in the province of Norrland (Northland), the workers said to visitors, "This is the way 'we' do here," and "This is the way 'we' do there," explaining the plant for the invited guests.

The employee is as proud of the enterprise as the owner himself. The ownership stays with the capital-bearing institution, or the private person, but neither worker nor owner can very well exist without teaming together. The owner of the machines cannot eat the machine, when hungry. He must have someone who runs the machine, in order to have the things he needs for his existence. Ownership and cooperation is the password in Sweden today. Swedes have formed enterprise-democratic committees, in which the employer and employee meet and debate how to price the product so that it may be had for less.

Sweden has in common with the United States a democratic social order. We have the right to vote and elect people to our government; we have the right to criticize those elected, without fearing that early in the morning a knock on the door will take us straight to jail or to a concentration camp. We rule the country by electing people to do the jobs to be done, and in the way "we" want them done. The community, or the commonwealth, must, therefore, manage to teach the citizen that individual cooperation for a better government lies with himself; his suffrage is, in other words, the most valuable thing he owns, socially speaking.

In Sweden today there are about 8,000 study circles, where people study different problems. Among these is democracy. Democracy has several aspects—the economic, the political, and the industrial being the main ones. Industrial democracy aims at increasing production. This augments profit, but also leads to higher standards, and the living standard may rise through better wages, or the products may be had at lower cost. That is the reason we here in Sweden have started the enterprise-democratic-committees, so that each may have opportunity to offer suggestions. In this way, also, we frame the safety program in factories. Through negotiations between the Swedish Employers Association, the Swedish Federation of Workers, and the Swedish Association of Functionaries, this remarkable act was passed in 1927. Many persons take their courses over and over again. At present there are some 250,000 men and women studying the different types of democracy. The main thing is continued contact between the owners of enterprises and the employed. To this can be added that we have only one Workers Federal Organization, which gives, of course, an additional strength to the country as a whole.

SWEDISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE COMFORTABLE AND THE DAMNED

CARL JONAS' Book-of-the-Month novel, *Jefferson Selleck,* for a time occasioned wonderment as to what, if anything, might be done with or about it. This book, the professionally enthusiastic critics say, is another *Babbitt,* and everyone knows that *Babbitt* and other of Sinclair Lewis' novels are supposed to contain important revelations as to middle-class America.

Jefferson Selleck is a happier man than Babbitt, for which we might be thankful were it not for the fact that the sort of happiness he knows is completely run-of-the-mill; the reader is neither jolted out of complacency nor lured by anything resembling a heroic vision, and we can be sure that any such book will be soon forgotten.

Mr. Selleck is a large, florid manufacturer, born to adequate money and social position, a staunch Republican, an average parent, and a top-quality member of the Midway City Chowder and Marching Society. The book is his autobiography, dictated during empty hours at home following an invalidism due to coronary thrombosis. Selleck takes us through the period of World War I, through the speakeasy camaraderie of prohibition, through the Great Depression and the subsequent maneuverings of that "gifted madman," Franklin Roosevelt, and when we come out at the other end we are just about where we were in the first place—bubbling thought and careless living having brought society no closer to grasp of the fundamental problems of the twentieth century. Two additions are noted, however. The first is the encroachment of the Atom upon our safety, and the second, a more welcome addition, is supplied by Selleck's approximation of "mystical experience" during his last illness. Thus much must be said for the man—he does not quail before death from illness any more than he does before the thought of H-bombs, and, because he is at least unafraid, the finale brings him closer to deep thoughtfulness than he ever has been before. He reflects as follows—into a dictaphone:

> All the elements of your salvation may be right around you, but you don't put them together until a special moment arrives and the special moment only arrives after that part of your mind about which you don't know anything has come to the conclusions it has to about them.... This time, while I was right at the center of everything, I seemed to extend out to the edges, too, out through all those rings of city, county, state and country so that the outside was just as much me as was the inside. Everything, I mean, seemed to breathe together. . . .

If "everything" could only have "breathed together" for Mr. Selleck twenty or thirty years earlier! If all the Sellecks had been less comfortable, closer to a realization that modern societies, just as the individuals in them, were preparing the way for coronary occlusion, the disease would have been more comprehensible and also less acute. During the crowded years of Selleck's life, endless social, economic and international injustices were committed, but Jefferson knew them not. His guilt, and the guilt of most Americans, likewise, lies not in their turning their backs upon social obligation or upon human sufferings—Selleck would never do that—but simply in being so surfeited with superficialities that the causes they might have served never came to their attention. What "causes" could Selleck have served effectively—just one man? In the first place, we must remember that Selleck is not one man, but a very substantial segment of the population; in the second place, that the Nazis were *almost* prevented from coming to power in Germany by the endeavors of courageous international socialists. Englishmen like Fenner Brockway—a Member of Parliament, who had a measure of understanding and support both at home and abroad—were on the scene, but not quite enough of them. When eight Alabama Negroes were sentenced to death in 1931 (the Scottsboro case) for a crime everyone knew they could not have committed, there were a number of staunch defenders of Civil Liberties who rushed to save

their lives; but too few to secure acquittal, since southern politics was involved. And every "Scottsboro case,"—there were many, no doubt, of which we have never heard—itself later became fuel for the fire of Communist recruiting and agitation, thus contributing to the plausibility of a third World War. There is no end to the cycle, unless Average Man wills it. Yes, Selleck's voice would have counted on these issues if that voice could ever have been unlimbered.

It seems to us that to benefit from reading such a novel as *Jefferson Selleck* (which mostly tells us, rather persuasively, that the average American is not such a bad sort, really), it is necessary to read the account of someone else's life during the same span of years—one who was as thoroughly cursed by his social position as Jefferson was blest by his. Such a book is available, too, in the form of a life-history account of prison experience supplied by Haywood Patterson, one of the defendants in the infamous Scottsboro Trial, which took place in 1931. *(Scottsboro Boy*, by Haywood Patterson and Earl Conrad, Doubleday and Bantam, 1951).

If we can stretch our minds far enough to include both careers, "Jefferson Selleck's" and Patterson's, and if we can see the social story of America—of the world, for that matter—as residing in the contrasts, both books may do more for us than either could singly. For most, Patterson's story will be incredible, just as that of "Jefferson Selleck" is so familiar that it hardly manages to be interesting.

Patterson, too, in a sense is a composite. He speaks for the silent thousands and millions of Negroes who have suffered persecution because there were none to speak for them. Here are some of Patterson's observations:

> There are almost no Negro lawyers in Alabama. They would be badly treated in a courtroom anyway. A young Negro wanting to be a lawyer, he will go North. The Negro defendant, he is left on the mercy of the shyster white lawyers who take his money away and fear to put up a real defense.
>
> Part of the bad law setup for Negroes in Alabama was the parole racket.
>
> Rhett Ainsley was a county parole agent. I first met him at Birmingham jail years before when he was a deputy warden there. Politics kept him moving from one state job to another.
>
> Convicts paroled from the Alabama prisons, they would be sent mostly to one of two counties. All the guys paroled in his county, Ainsley just used them for his own purposes. He'd put them on a job making twenty-five or thirty dollars a week, then they had to give him a kickback from their wages. Others had to go around to his place week ends to clean his lawn, his house, or do other extra work. Prisoners who opposed that, they didn't last long in the streets. Ainsley threw them back in jail. Many guys that were paroled under him, they were put back in prison two or three times.
>
> Ainsley wouldn't do this to white convicts, only Negroes who were powerless to protest. Whites would set on him quick if he tried that. If a Negro went to expose him nobody would listen.
>
> Most Negro convicts wouldn't dare expose him anyway for fear of spending their whole life in jail. They made it hot for you on the inside and it stayed hot when you got out.

The documents reproduced in an appendix to *Scottsboro Boy* tell a tale fully as effective as Patterson's own. Patterson and seven other Negroes were accused of raping two white women, apparently because they had successfully resisted the efforts of some white freight-train hikers to throw them off a train, and revenge, as often, was inventive. Black boys shouldn't resist attack; ergo, accuse them of something that will really fix them! Two female vagabonds on the train became accomplices in the plan, and the "fix" was arranged, though one of the two women later repudiated her "confession." The accusation, however, was all that was needed. Patterson spent eighteen years in prison, narrowly escaped the death penalty, and is a free man today only because he escaped to the North in 1948.

One of the politico Judges of Patterson's many trials made the following of record in his instructions to a jury in 1933, amply

demonstrating the unconstitutional and unjust practices of Alabama law:

> The law would authorize conviction on the testimony of Victoria Price alone, if, from that evidence, taken into consideration with all the other evidence in the case, both for the State and for the defendant, convinced you beyond a reasonable doubt that she had been ravished. *The law does not require corroboration.*

1931: Selleck was juggling finances, and Patterson was juggling for his life. All Patterson did was to ride a freight in search of work—"our fathers couldn't hardly support us"—and all Selleck did was to dream up the Midway City Chowder and Marching Society.

At least, though, Patterson can be heard. And Selleck at least did some reflecting on human interdependence before he died.

COMMENTARY
IT HAS HAPPENED HERE

THERE are certain books which every American, regardless of his taste in literature, has an obligation to read, or at least to know about. The story of Haywood Patterson (see Review) does not make pleasant reading. Of itself, it will light no fires of understanding. The tale of how an innocent man can spend eighteen years in a state penitentiary and finally gain his freedom only by becoming a "fugitive from justice" is not calculated to win friends for the United States.

We can hardly afford, however, to suppress the story of Haywood Patterson because of what opposing propagandists may say or do about it. Nor is it a suitable comment on the case of the Scottsboro boys to say that lynchings and executions of Negroes in the South have *diminished* during recent years. For the Scottsboro boys, the Nazis were not over in Germany: *they were here.* For eight human beings, the over-riding political drama of their lives was cast with the wrong people in all the villainous roles.

Of course, if it is justifiable to measure this kind of evil in statistical terms, then it has been justifiable to remain relatively ignorant of the case of the Scottsboro boys, especially while we were engaged in suppressing much "bigger" evils abroad. But if the crime against these eight men is as great as the crime against the millions who suffered similarly in Europe, then we have been wrong to ignore it—as wrong as we say the communists are wrong when they claim that individuals are not "important," that only the welfare of the *masses* of men needs our attention.

"Politics," we often say, will solve no basic problems. But the question of who is responsible for what happened to the Scottsboro boys, if passed over as a merely "political" issue, will eventually drag even philosophers and mystics into the turbulent arena of social adjustment.

We may not be able to decide with any sense of certainty just who is responsible, and to what degree; we may find, in fact, that the question of personal responsibility for social or "corporate" acts is terribly confused. But then the question should become an inquiry into the reasons for this confusion. Why, in our time, are the relationships of group responsibility so unrecognizably blurred? Inattention to this question, today, amounts to passive acceptance of, if not participation in, the ugliest crimes of which men are capable.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE problem of what to do about the average child's propensity for tales of warfare, crime, and general sudden death is always easier to avoid than to discuss. Probably all of us are tired of banalities to the effect that "good reading"—undefined—will win our youth away from such Evils. Another banality—though true enough at its core—is that when we have developed sufficiently rewarding child-parent relationships, the demand for vicarious excitement will be greatly diminished.

The fact is that the spirit of adventure and the natural human urge for excitement play an important part in childish avidity for hearing about dangerous things, and this urge needs to be met sympathetically rather than suppressed.: Yet something more than these generalities are needed, although practical suggestions are usually difficult to make.

Three current offerings of entertainment, however, seem to fill the bill. We commend for family consumption the motion picture, *The Red Skies of Montana;* a Bamtam pocket-edition novel, *Look to the Mountain,* by Le Grand Cannon, Jr.; and *The Raging Tide,* by Ernest Gann—available as both motion picture and novel. These three stories have to do, in sequence, with a fascinating kind of "warfare" and perpetual risk of sudden death, with exploration of the Colonial-Indian wilderness, and with a murderer's ingenious escape. Yet each also contains other dimensions of worth, relieving the events of ugliness and brutality. Both children and parents, moreover, can appreciate all three—especially *Look to the Mountain* and *Red Skies*—and will undoubtedly find them conducive to spontaneous discussion and reflection.

We could as easily introduce these three dramas as contributing to "nature study." *Red Skies of Montana* portrays a series of battles between men and the raging forest fires. Presenting the most colorful department of forest fire suppression work, "smoke jumping," it reproduces all the thrills of a full-scale war, yet here no man's hand is raised against another's—save momentarily—and the enemy is an "inanimate" one, the sort of fire which destroys national resources, lives and property.

Readers familiar with pacifist literature may recall William James' essay on *The Moral Equivalent of War,* which proposed conscription of youth for constructive peacetime service and claimed the necessity of some sort of consecrated and difficult effort as a means for maturing the young into full manhood. *Red Skies* could be used in support of James' thesis, for the discipline and hardihood required of able forest fire fighters, as revealed, is attractive to youth. As the fire leaps to endanger a whole forest region, we are able to observe the fascinating problems of organization and deployment of men which have absorbed the energies of some of the best practical "battle" administrators of the United States—the Forest Rangers and Supervisors. Then, too, as in the case with all difficult situations, there is the human story of the man who wonders whether or not he is a coward, but who finally discovers that he is not.

Red Skies has undoubtedly drawn on much of the interest stirred by George R. Stewart's *Fire,* and this seems a good thing; the two together, the book and the motion picture, should at least make it plain that there are other ways than war to avoid a dull sedentary existence.

Look to the Mountain is, more directly, a "nature" story. It deals with the settling of New Hampshire during the years 1769-1777. The study of "nature" here has little to do with botany, biology, or geology, but Le Grand Cannon has a way of writing about wilderness experience which captures the interest and the imagination as surely as if Indian battles were supplied on every other page which they are not. The young hero of this story is simply a good woodsman, and being a good woodsman he manages to survive the

hazards of pre-revolutionary wilderness travel. His exploratory wanderings to locate suitable land for himself and his young wife become a fascinating saga, complete with the actual injuries and hardships which were to be expected at that time.

It is difficult to convey in a review the appeal of this book, which resides in the telling, in the obvious familiarity of the author with the land traversed by canoe and on foot, and with the customs and language of the people of 1770. All one can say is that neither child nor adult can escape a feeling of fascinated participation in each one of Whit's journeys. The fascination is great enough, even, to prepare us for accepting naturally such matters as the covering of sixty or seventy miles in a day's run; the reader, after a few hundred pages, is able to realize how little the average man of the twentieth century uses his capacity for physical endurance. Above all, *Look to the Mountain is* a story of complete self-reliance, and a story which demonstrates how the careful observation of even the slightest details can easily mean the difference between life and death, if one has sustained an injury or been caught in a blizzard. Whit is a man who has come to terms with his habitat. He is thus whole and strong in a manner that serves as an excellent childhood ideal.

Ernest Gann's *The Raging Tide is* the story of a petty criminal who, after an unpremeditated killing, escapes the police by stowing away on a fishing boat. Born on the wrong side of the tracks, living always in contempt of "honest" labor of every kind, Bruno gradually undergoes alteration. The beauty and excitement of the life at sea has much to do with this. Even more does he become responsive to the justice, kindliness and self-reliant strength of the Scandinavian skipper who allows him to remain on board and work for his keep. Incidentally, *The Raging Tide* is rather remarkable in avoiding character stereotypes, and the plot works out realistically enough so that readers are not likely to label it "hopelessly romantic."

Besides being a story of a criminal's reformation at the hands of nature, it is also something of a document on the lives of San Francisco fishermen. Ernest Gann knows his subject well and there will be few readers who will not find themselves stirred by a wish to spend part of their own time dealing as directly and as primitively as these fisherman do with the economic problem. Fortunately, the motion picture version of *The Raging Tide*, featuring Richard Conte and Charles Bickford, is an adequate, if abbreviated, reproduction of the book.

It is, of course, just a suggestion, but it seems to us that any child, family, or parent who hustles off his urge for excitement to these motion pictures or focusses it upon these books will begin to see that the greatest excitement of all is that of growing to be a man, and that this subtle process can ideally be found in those forms of striving which are beyond competition, beyond politics, and beyond warfare. Men can become men in politics, through competition, and in warfare, too, but these latter are all extraneous elements which have to be circumvented or ignored while the real growth in character proceeds.

One reason for devoting space to these three stories is that we like the implication that all "worth-while writing" need not come to us out of a hoary past, nor all of the "worth-while reading" have to do with material devoid of adventure, excitement, and danger.

FRONTIERS

Invitation to Mr. Emerson?

AN article by Ferner Nuhn in the *Christian Century* for March 5 deals so thoughtfully with the withdrawal of Ralph Waldo Emerson from the Unitarian Church—practically approving Emerson's decision—that it hardly seems a proper contribution to a truly "Christian" journal. We shall not complain, however, if the *CC* chooses to print such mildly heretical discussions, and in the present instance, the reason is plain to see.

Emerson, Mr. Nuhn points out, was the forerunner of an age to come. The new knowledge of the world of nature was flowing into the mind of his time, deepening the sense of intuitive religion for all those who were able to feel that the "revelation" of science ought to be received in the same reverent spirit as the traditional wisdom of Scriptures. Emerson, in fact, could no longer believe in some of this "wisdom" as crystallized in formal church ritual, and when his pew-owning congregation insisted upon a literal interpretation of the Lord's Supper, he asked to be relieved of his pastoral duties. He was relieved, and the world both inside and out of the church gained vastly as a result.

It is here that we reach Mr. Nuhn's real point. He is looking about, hopefully, for a twentieth-century Emerson who will break loose from the conventional outlook of *our* time, which is very different from New England in the 1830's. Mr. Nuhn wants a modern Emerson to do for science and politics what Emerson did for religion. "An act today," he says, "of the quality and courage of Emerson's in 1832 would face quite other orthodoxies than he did and move in quite a different ideological direction, to be true to the same values and accomplish equally fruitful results."

Questions like this one are good to ponder. We, for example, have often wondered what direction the life of a man like Thomas Paine might take, today, could he be born again. Would he write another *Age of Reason,* brought up to date with the latest scientific footnotes? Would he straightway join the Freethinkers Society, and be heard to enlarge on the threadbare themes of today's scientific materialism? Would he ever be found stirring up a war—even a "War for Independence"—when before him lay the evidence of what war means in the twentieth century?

It seems likely that the course chosen by a man of Paine's spirit would be just as shocking to the great majority of our time as Paine's actual course was to the eighteenth century—he would see the defects of our age, and furiously set to work. He would write a new *Crisis,* addressing the moral lethargy of the twentieth century, make as many or more enemies, and, very likely, do as much or greater good.

This is no novel theme. Dostoevsky used it in his chapter on the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov,* returning Jesus to medieval Spain, where He fell into the hands of the Inquisition almost as soon as he arrived from On High. Paine, doubtless, would have similar difficulties with Congressional investigating committees in the United States, and if he ventured to Russia he would probably receive the routine treatment of the MVD in a matter of hours.

But Emerson, gentle Emerson—what would he do? One wonders if, actually, any employment at all could be found today for Emerson's particular kind of genius. What would we do with him, or, better say, what could he do with us? America in the 1830's was lashed by no ugly compulsions. An expanding optimism gripped the land, instead of neurotic suspicions and the mounting fear of herded populations. Emerson drew from the riches of his mind the intellectual and moral nourishment of an era which was, in several senses, an era of awakening, of hungering after truth. People were of a mood to listen to Emerson, and like a light which glows more brightly in a supporting atmosphere, he stirred an awakening of mind which, as Ferner Nuhn says, "flowed out over the secular lowlands, into art,

literature, science, philanthropy, education, social reform."

How would Emerson speak today, and to whom? What particular tracts for the time would he devise? Let us note that Emerson left the church, but he saw no enemies and made none. Emerson, then, would be *for* certain enduring truths. Again, leaving the church, he sought no other institutional alliances. Even Brook Farm was somewhat too "organized" a venture for him. Like Tolstoy, who never joined a Tolstoyan community, Emerson remained his own man, his own movement.

But Emerson, it seems to us, would not come back, even if he could, in such a time as this. He would wait until his audience was born. A Froebel must have children before he can teach, and a Washington needs patriots. The present hardly deserves an influx of great men. The struggle of a country to free itself from the inhumane custom of enslaving the people of another race could gain a Lincoln to champion the cause of freedom, but a nation which finds its chief inspiration in rattling its atom bombs invites Terrorists rather than Philosophers.

In short, the issues of our time and age are not yet clearly drawn. Too many men are still persuaded that they can buy their way into paradise, or out of trouble, which amounts to the same thing. Too many still think that our happiness has been grossly interfered with by the people of less fortunate countries, and that a proper firmness with the rest of the world will restore the good old days. Too many hope that "science" may yet find a way to perform the miracles which religion promised, but did not make good on. Far too many, to sum up, expect a salvation to come from some other source than the quality of their own lives, and peace to arise by some other means than their own strenuous attempts at understanding.

Emerson today, we think, would be a very lonely man. The churches, which have not changed so very much since he left them, could not comfort him. They have become weak and pliable, but they have not opened their eyes. It is too soon for Emerson's generous optimism in behalf of the human race to find vindication. Perhaps, after another generation has passed, his time will come again.