

## EQUALITY AND UTOPIA

THE simple act of noting that half-truths may be the source of incalculable confusion seldom disturbs anyone. The fact is too familiar to be denied. It is, we see at once, the element of truth in an inaccurate or incomplete statement which often persuades us to accept the statement in its entirety; and, after a little reflection, we may also recognize in ourselves the common human tendency of wanting our credos to be forthright and "simple."

It is easy to admit this in the abstract. Particular instances of half-truth, however, are less palatable subjects for consideration. Take the famous phrase, "All men are created equal." Even if one overlooks the potentialities for argument in the word "created," there is still ample occasion for debate. What is so evident as the differences among human beings? Common sense, of course, has caused many men to explain that the "equality" of the Declaration of Independence of the United States expresses the philosophic or liberal conception of the equal "value" of all men. All, we say, are entitled to equal consideration before the law. Equality of opportunity is an ideal of our society, and no man has any more rights than any other man simply because he happens to be born in a certain family, or race, or enjoys a large inheritance. This, we argue, is the meaning of Equality as conceived by the Founding Fathers.

But here, again, we tend to leave the subject at an abstract level. This definition may serve well enough for the purposes of law-making and public administration, but should "equality" have no more than a political significance? By restricting its meaning in this way we convey our admission that men are *not* equal in respect to their physical, mental, and moral attributes. After all, some people are stronger than others. Some men habitually tell the truth; others habitually don't. The differences in intellectual ability are known to

everyone with any kind of experience of learning in groups. The fact is that some people find the disciplines of the mind natural and inviting activities, while others are tortured by the effort involved in the study of mathematics or languages. Those lacking in intellectual facility, however, may shine in manual skills, or they may be more stable and dependable as human beings than some of the brilliant scholars. Even when the modifying factors of family and cultural environment are taken into account, these differences remain in significant degree, and ought to make us wonder why they exist and what they may mean.

But such differences, although important, are only a fraction of the differences we encounter among human beings. Some people seem to have an innate esthetic sense. They respond to beauty eagerly. Their lives are enriched simply by coming into contact with scenes and experiences which are practically "unseen" by many others. Why should this be? Then there are people who have had natural "poise" from childhood, while in the same family may be those who are forever stumbling about, emotionally, the victims of short-term enthusiasms, and are often quite unaware of the extraordinary inconsistencies in their behavior. For these latter, the feeling of the moment is so authoritative that they endow it with timeless validity, forgetting that, yesterday, they felt quite otherwise. We tend to call such people "shallow," or "impulsive," and, when recognizing these tendencies in ourselves, we feel personally the weaknesses characteristic of those who live their lives in imitation of other, stronger individuals.

We have, then, a principled theory of equality for our political life, but only rule-of-thumb ideas about the inequality we meet in our day-to-day, practical existence. The equality idea grows out of moral philosophy—it is a postulate to which we are bidden to subscribe by both our cultural

tradition and some inner instinct of justice. Equality, then, we may say, rests upon moral law. But what do the obvious facts of difference, these widely varying inequalities, rest upon? Beyond the tentative theories of heredity and environment, which are notably inadequate, we do not know. Human excellence, at any rate, is not produced by stockyard methods of breeding. Mendel's law, suitable for raising peas, guinea pigs, and drosophila flies, has only limited application to human beings. Nor does the role of environment, while doubtless important, provide anything like complete explanation.

The attempt to find *laws* with which to explain human differences is patently a dangerous undertaking. Certainly, any Determinist theory devised for this purpose—if it has any plausibility at all—may be quickly adapted to support some authoritarian political scheme. The "Nordic Aryan" doctrine is too familiar to enlarge upon, while its parallel in theology—the Calvinist theory of Divine Predestination—looks to God for its principle of selection instead of to Blood and Soil. The Communist doctrine of determination by Environment, which, in turn, has been suitably equipped to shape human character by the all-powerful State, is another example of the claim to have discovered the law of human differences. All such claims are anathema to the liberal intelligence, and justly so.

Is it, we may ask, within the realm of rational inquiry to seek for laws of human differences? Is there any conceivable principle of differentiation which could not be exploited by politicians with the claim that it justifies their particular brand of inequality? Quite possibly, the obscurity of these differences may be the most fortunate thing in the world for a free society!

In the West, the idea of hierarchy spread from the Medieval pattern of social relationships. Each man had the status of his class, with whatever rights and duties went with it. At the apex of the social pyramid was the king or emperor, who ruled, it was claimed, by divine right. And as the

behavior of divinity was often highly irrational, so, also, was the behavior of kings. In large part, the criterion of morality was in the status of the individual. Only the Church could judge the acts of Kings, and only God could judge the Church. And since all that men knew of God's judgments came from the Church, the Church quite logically was accounted to be infallible.

The stirrings of Peter Abelard's mind in the twelfth century marked what was perhaps the first public and determined effort to rationalize the issues of religion. Abelard was not dangerous to the Church because of what he thought, but because he dared to think at all. Any kind of serious thinking, obviously, challenges in its entirety the morality which derives from status.

The progress of Europe from the twelfth century onward might be measured on a scale of ascending rationality. More and more things were regarded in the impersonal light of reason, until, finally, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the political relationships of human beings obtained rational definition. Here, perhaps, is the historical meaning of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. They mark the conquest of politics by independent reason.

Can we press the light of reason any further?

Let us recognize the ineradicable tendency of the human mind to search for final explanations. Whether or not a final explanation of the behavior of man is desirable—whether or not such an explanation may threaten to establish some kind of scientific fascism—we are going to go on looking for it. Despite the fact that it is politically unpopular to study human differences, curious men, and men hungry for knowledge about themselves, will continue to study them.

Let us recognize, also, the almost irrepressible utopian strain which emerges in men who think that they have the explanation of human differences. Calvin, rigorous logician that he was, attempted to apply the "laws of God" to the city

of Geneva, as soon as he satisfied himself that he knew what they were. Whenever men discover what they think is the "cause" of human differences—and when this "cause" seems to them capable of manipulation—the discoverers, like Calvin, immediately start to play "God"; or, as in the case of the Communists, they declare that they act in behalf of the Law of Nature or of History. Or, more naïvely, they may simply claim that they know the secret of human freedom, and argue that this gives them the right to drop atom bombs on cities filled with defenseless civilians.

There is one theory, however, which will support no tyranny, whether of heaven or earth, and which ought to be considered despite the difficulties involved. It is that men make their own differences, build their own characters, develop their own talents and skills. *How* men do this is obviously the great unanswered question which haunts this theory, but its consequences, at least, give ground for being eternally watchful of human freedom. For if men, somehow, create themselves, then they need freedom above all for their self-development. Every man becomes a cause unto himself, and the means of his own salvation.

This is a doctrine—hardly an explanation—of human differences which makes of man a god—unfinished gods, perhaps, but nonetheless of the high order of creative beings. Some of us, we find, are but half- or quarter-made, but some stand as models of human perfection to the rest. This doctrine leaves us with many mysteries, many contradictions, to work on, but at least preserves for us the freedom to work, and a foundation of freedom is perhaps all that we can hope for at this juncture of history.

## *Letter from* **SOUTH AFRICA**

NATAL.—Until very recently, Natal was a particularly peaceful, pleasant and happy province of the Union of South Africa. Such political problems as beset her she took in her stride. Her capital city, Pietermaritzburg, had earned the nickname of "Sleepy Hollow," and all the efforts of the Mayor and Corporation to change this to "City of Flowers" had met with tolerant amusement but no success. Natalians were said to suffer from "Natal Fever"—a tendency to take things as they come, to enjoy the sunshine and the beauties of the country.

NOW, all this has changed. Natal has been shaken out of her complacency by the actions of the Union Government since the Nationalist Party came into power with a small majority at the general election of 1948; and more particularly by the events that have taken place in the first six months of 1952.

The more extreme members of the Nationalist Party are pledged to work for a Republic. This has been known and understood for many years. But in addition they are now accused by the opposition, which represents most of the English-speaking and the "moderate" Afrikaan-speaking South Africans, of being anti-democratic and thoroughly totalitarian in outlook. Recent legislation passed through parliament, often with the aid of a guillotine motion and in each case by a small majority, has, it is said, been aimed at enhancing the powers of the Executive and curtailing the legitimate freedom of the individual citizen. When, in 1950, a law was passed to remove the Coloured voters of the Cape Province from the common roll, it was passed in a manner which conflicted with the Constitution of the Union of South Africa as expressed in the Act of Union of 1910. Tested in the Supreme Court, this action of the present Government was declared to be illegal by the unanimous verdict of five judges. The Government has replied by creating a High Court of Parliament which is to be superior to the Supreme Court of the land; and has thus denied the right of the Judiciary to interpret the Law and to test the validity of the acts of the Executive.

There is now, therefore, an acute political crisis, and Natal, a stronghold of the Opposition parties, (the United Party which was led by Smuts until his death in

1949, and the Labour Party), is deeply disturbed. The people of Natal have become keenly conscious of their constitutional history.

Before 1908, Natal, like the Cape of Good Hope, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, was a British Colony. A National Convention held in 1908-9 drew up a constitution for a Union (but not a federation), of the four colonies. After a referendum, Natal finally agreed to the proposals, which were expressed in a written Constitution embodied in an Act of Union. This Act was passed by the British Government and became law in 1910.

The Constitution of the Union of South Africa had certain particular features which are now seen to be of great importance. While making provision for the principal governing authorities of the Union—that is, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary—and indicating their respective functions in general terms, it did not include statements as to general principles in accordance with which these bodies were to function, nor as to the rights of those whom they were to govern. In these respects the South Africa Act resembled the Acts establishing other British Dominions, and differed from the constitution of the United States of America, from the constitutions of the individual states which are members of that federal union, and from those of most European countries. Moreover, the constitution embodied in the South Africa Act was a "flexible" constitution and not a "rigid" one; that is, it was a constitution which the Union Parliament has full powers to amend, subject only to the requirements of special procedure provided for in the case of certain "entrenched" provisions. The two entrenched clauses, dealing respectively with the equality of the two official languages, (English and Dutch or Afrikaans), and the existing voting rights of Non-Europeans, could only be amended or repealed by a Bill passed by both Houses of Parliament sitting together and agreed to on a third reading by not less than two thirds of the members of both Houses.

Apart from these two special clauses, the constitution was such as to give the Parliament and Government of the Union an unchallengeable authority over South African affairs, subject only to the limitation imposed by the power of the Governor General to withhold assent to bills, and of the Sovereign to disallow them. These latter powers were

never in fact exercised, but in any case they were eventually swept away by the passage of the Statute of Westminster by the British Parliament in 1931, followed by legislation enacted in South Africa, namely the Status of the Union Act of 1934 and the Privy Council Appeals Act of 1950. The Parliament of the Union of South Africa, under its constitution as now amended by the above acts, is a sovereign parliament, supreme over all other institutions within the State, with unlimited powers of legislation. Of the eighty or more Sovereign States in the modern world, only three have Sovereign Parliaments in this sense—Great Britain, New Zealand, and South Africa. In every other Sovereign State the legislature cannot amend the constitution in the same way as it passes ordinary laws.

This being an undoubted fact, what are the grounds for the present political upheaval in South Africa? In the first place, resentment has been slowly growing as recent legislation gave very great powers to individual ministers to curtail the freedom of citizens. Secondly, the government has now over-ridden the original constitution. As has been said, the Act of Union included two "entrenched clauses" demanding a special parliamentary procedure to amend them. The Statute of Westminster, 1931, was passed "on the understanding that these entrenched provisions remained untouched." In 1934 when the Status of the Union Act was passed, the entrenched clauses were again specifically accepted. In 1940 and 1945 they were again recognized as binding, and these precedents, it is held, should have created a convention that the entrenched clauses would always be respected by the House Assembly. In 1950, however, the convention was cast aside by a narrow majority in the house, the Government of the day declaring that it is no longer bound to observe them.

It is seen, then, that under the present constitution of the Union of South Africa, to quote a leading authority, "it is legally possible for a bare parliamentary majority to deprive individuals and whole communities of their established rights and to institute tyranny over them." It becomes clear, in fact, that "no constitution, however excellent, is infallible. The objects with which it was devised and the principles on which it is based can be defeated by the way in which it is worked by the authorities established under it." Where there is not a tradition of respect for democratic principles and constitutional conventions

strong enough to restrain Parliament from abusing prodigious powers, there is real danger that a professedly democratic sovereign Parliament may become an instrument of tyranny.

Hence the growing feeling, most noticeable in Natal, that the constitutional system of the Union is not, after all, suited to its needs. A mass meeting held in Durban in June, 1952, demanded the calling of a new National Convention to reconsider the whole issue, and to "dig deeper and sounder foundations for democracy in South Africa." This request for a National Convention, then officially made by the Natal Provincial Council, has been summarily refused by the Government of the day. The result is a growing resentment and a mounting crescendo of political excitement, in the midst of which the voices of those who demand that Natal should secede from the Union become daily more noticeable. Others point out that Natal, in fact, abides by the original Act of Union. The rest, if they follow the present government, have already seceded.

SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### MY SON, MY SON!

No matter what you may have heard or read, *My Son John* can be defended as one of the most illuminating and valuable movies of the year. While many clever and erudite writers have panned this monumental effort, starring Helen Hayes, Dean Jagger and the late Robert Walker, for its super-stereotyped portrayal of righteous Americanism—scoring triumph after triumph over depraved communist "ideals"—these critics, we think, have missed the main point. The important thing, in our opinion, to be said about this picture is that anything so utterly awful as *My Son John*, so crammed with mawkish sentimentalism, distorted characterization, religious and American Legion propaganda is bound to make even conventional stomachs turn—and once a person's sensibilities have revolted at the overdose of these ingredients, he may develop a protective allergy against smaller and more insidious portions of the same. There will be those who feel it a shame that excellent acting should be thus exploited, but this judgment also strikes us as narrow. Bad acting would have turned *My Son John* into a farce, and this is a picture which should be taken seriously, for it is seriously bad.

*My Son John* is presumably concerned with exposing the forces which presently threaten the American political tradition, and it certainly succeeds, even if with an entirely opposite effect. The worst foe to any affirmative political tradition, actually, is militant fear. Militant fear is what we succumb to whenever we spend most of our energies on an "anti"-crusade. Militant fear puts us on the psychological defensive and on the military offensive. Militant fear has well nigh ruined the Russians, just as it ruined the Germans, and as it now bids fair to ruin us.

*My Son John* is a determined builder of militant fear. The writers and producers have not missed a trick. According to this picture, anyone who entertains socialist notions or who criticizes

"capitalism" is on the road to depravity. Once started on this path, it will be but a short time before he shows no love nor honor to his Mother and Father, before he begins to be intimate with the wrong sort of women and is ready to betray his country's secrets (whatever they may be) to Russia. This process of deterioration originally begins, it appears, from too much thinking and reading. John's father has no such trouble. He goes to church, attends Legion meetings, and "thinks with his heart." John's brothers have no trouble either—they played football instead of twisting their minds with study. Everybody, in fact, except John is perfectly swell, including pious FBI'er Van Heflin, because they *all* think with their hearts.

All that is Good is associated with the symbols of the conventional—with the Legion cap, with Frank McHugh's priestly robes, with Helen Hayes' rosary, and with football. These things may be good for something, each in its own way, but the trouble is that in this picture they achieve their value only by opposing the symbols of communist evil. God is good because the Devil is bad; we must love because we must fear. The FBI, even though we know this isn't especially apt to be the case, can appear almost tender because the Communists slaughter Robert Walker in the last reel with a vicious burst of machine-gun fire. Political and social illiteracy is good because social criticism leads to cynicism and treason.

The poor Russians are doubtless being fed a similar fare. Most of them are probably so used to it by now that a ritualistic orgy like *My Son John*, with the roles of Communism and Capitalism reversed, would be merely routine "entertainment," while here in America we can hope that at least half the viewers of the picture went home knowing something was wrong with their digestion, or suspecting that the propaganda sauce was rather greasy. This, so far as we can see, is one real advantage America has over Russia: when propaganda is overdone, a good many people recognize and talk about it.

Sociologists are now saying that intelligent men must learn to be "marginal"—must move away, that is, from the "adjustments" of those who are both satisfied and circumscribed by group thinking. Certain it is that intelligence and reason depend upon the capacity to evaluate, and evaluation involves the ability to compare. Unless one is willing and able to peer beyond the confines of his immediate mental environment—and one must be "marginal" to do this—he cannot be reasonable.

A passage from Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia* indicates the extent to which social and political patterns of behavior in our own culture inflame consciousness of differences almost automatically. Taylor was a specialist in psychological warfare, having unique opportunity for observing the fashion in which the victor suffers nearly as much as the vanquished in this form of battle:

Within the United States, the Democratic and Republican Parties constantly wage psychological warfare against each other, which means that they do not confine themselves to open, avowed propaganda, but resort to the whispering campaign and other subversive techniques of morale-disintegration. The National Association of Manufacturers and the labor unions frequently utilize the same methods.

Even in personal relations psychological warfare is not unknown. Many husbands practice it upon wives or vice versa, and parents practice it upon children.

The truth is that we are all addicted to psychological warfare, because it is sometimes an effective means of gaining victory. What we forget is that whenever the goal of victory implies some progress of human enlightenment, the use of psychological warfare is self-defeating, for it darkens the minds both of those against whom it is used and of those who use it. Because delusion is socially disintegrating and the goal of psychological warfare is social disintegration, psychological warfare usually consists of trying to implant delusions in the minds of one's adversaries. Thus, when it is directed against organized delusion it can at best lead only to substituting one delusion for another, and more often leads to two delusions growing in place of one, for, as exposure to Eastern thought and my own experience

taught me, it is almost impossible to delude others without developing delusions oneself.

All this was clearly understood by the Buddha more than two thousand years ago, even though the term psychological warfare had not been invented. Without adopting all the extreme Buddhist views, it seems to me that we can safely lay down one rule in regard to the problem of delusion: Never attempt to combat delusion by using the subversive, disintegrative, and delusive techniques of psychological warfare against those who are afflicted with it. General adoption of this rule would, I believe, greatly reduce the amount of delusion in the world.

Just a few years ago, the average American was being helped—through the exigencies of our foreign policy—to see that he had been too harsh in his criticism of Russia. The Russians were not such a bad sort after all. They had let religion come back, they had chummed with President Roosevelt, and they had helped democracy win the war against Fascism. Today the Russians are made to seem even worse than they seemed in the '30's, and Communism is held to be the eternal enemy of "Christianity." Meanwhile, we have again accepted the Germans as members of the human race, even granting that they may be very much like ourselves. Thus it is no longer necessary to prove that the Germans accepted Nazism, not because the Germans were intrinsically bad, but simply in the way that most people accept most things. But if we believe this, must it not also be granted that *we* may now be swallowing similar doses of the sort of propaganda which renders men politically insane? This, it appears, was often true in Germany, among the "fanatics" who supported Hitler. A passage from Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* illustrates the point:

To-morrow I am going to England. In a few weeks I shall rehlrn, but only to pick up my things, before leaving Berlin altogether.

Poor Frl. Schroeder is inconsolable: "I shall never find another gentleman like you, Herr Issyvoo—always so punctual with the rent . . . I'm sure I don't know what makes you want to leave Berlin, all of a sudden, like this. . . ."

It's no use trying to explain to her, or talking politics. Already she is adapting herself, as she will adapt herself to every new regime. This morning I even hear] her talking reverently about "Der Fuhrer" to the porter's wife. If anybody were to remind her that, at the elections last November, she voted Communist, she would probably deny it hotly, and in perfect good faith. She is merely acclimatizing herself, in accordance with a natural law, like an animal which changes its coat for the winter. Thousands of people like Frl. Schroeder are acclimatizing themselves.

Now and again, either circumstances or a little native good sense makes mockery of propaganda extremes. The most heartening international news we have read for some time is furnished by reports of the conduct of American and Russian athletes participating in the Olympic games, and, incidentally, supplying additional proof that ordinary men and women, given half a chance, can cut through political delusion. The Rev. Robert Richards, for instance, after winning the Olympic pole-vault championship, was warmly embraced by a Russian rival. "Why," said Richards, "can't the rest of the people of the world get along as well as the competitors?" After a fiercely contested rowing race, Vladimir Kuchmenko, chief of Soviet rowing, remarked: "Welcome, friends of America. We are happy for these friendships we have made on the water. We want the sportsmen of Russia and the sportsmen of America always to compete in this friendly spirit." A U.S. coxswain answered with thanks for the Russian hospitality (the Russians had eagerly lent U.S. rowers a scull in time of need, and feted them after the race), saying: "This has been a wonderful experience for all of us. We are glad to come here and meet your people and find they are just like us."

If some Russians can be "just like" us, even after having to "adjust" to a constant stream of anti-American propaganda, then they obviously still have left some capacity to re-adjust. And if, in another sense, the Russians are just like us, it means that they have suffered from psychological warfare conducted in the name of patriotism by

cultural agencies within their country, just as we suffer daily here in America. Surely there is ground for some mutual feeling of brotherhood, even here, and perhaps there is hope that both "psychological warfare" and "institutional delusions" may someday come to an end.

**COMMENTARY**  
**THE AGE OF ANACHRONISMS**

WHAT are the characteristics of "our time"? Should we accept the conventional analysis to the effect that, within the span of a single generation, we have witnessed transitions from the Machine Age to the Age of Power, and from the Age of Power to the Atomic Age? Or should we, recalling the title of Karen Horney's classic, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, call it the Age of Anxiety?

It is certainly an age of conflict—conflict of men and nations, conflict of ideals. But what, a century from now, will be the tendencies of the present that have survived? At no time in the past has the demand for the reconciliation of religious and racial differences been so strenuous, nor confronted with such stubborn resistance.

This week's correspondence from South Africa is a good illustration. Ironically enough, both the ideals of equality and justice and the frustrations of those ideals, as found in the South African scene, are products of European civilization. The South African situation, while historically of tremendous complexity, is nevertheless made up of issues which gain sharp outline against the background of the liberal tradition. Which is characteristic of our time—the ideals or the attack upon them?

The present generation of adults in the West has tasted deep of evils which we once had thought belonged only to the Dark Ages. Under the compulsions of war, veneer after veneer has been stripped from our lives, exposing ferocities that were almost forgotten by the Europe of the nineteenth century.

A kind of desperation pervades the present, but is it a desperation that belongs to us naturally, or is it the emotional harvest of extreme disillusionment, springing from the discovery that we are not, in fact, the fine people we thought we were?

This is not a quarrel with the human race. Progress, we think, is a thing both possible and to be sought. On the other hand, we feel that the time has come to institute a loud and insistent quarrel with the theories of progress that have contributed to the contradictions of the present age. And this, of necessity, means untiring questioning of the assumptions of conventional religion, conventional science, and conventional political philosophy. Such questioning is seldom popular, least of all in an Age of Anxiety, but only such questioning, it seems to us, offers hope of preventing the Age of Anxiety from turning into an Age of Despair.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE dietary field, today, is one in which few angels and even fewer educators dare to tread. So many dedicated and convinced theorists have put in an appearance, each manipulating the discoveries of biochemistry to support special panaceas, that it is virtually impossible to discuss dietetics without becoming involved in endless debate. On the other hand, intelligent study of health from a dietetic standpoint seems such an improvement over reliance on miracle-drugs and the leave-everything-to-the-doctor habit that a few currents of self-reliance may be expected to result from this wave of interest in foods.

What we may say, here, about Adelle Davis' *Let's Have Healthy Children* is not to be taken as an extra-special endorsement of this particular book or its author. Our interest is in the fact that, although she has something of a national reputation as a "food-extremist," Miss Davis emphasizes the extent to which over-concern with feeding habits is both unnecessary and also often a serious disadvantage to the young. All parents who have been students of nutritional tables and expounders of the strict-regime method of pumping the proper proportions of nutriment into infants should read the section of *Let's Have Healthy Children* entitled "Self-selection of Foods." Here the well-known experiment of Dr. Clara M. Davis is presented, wherein several six-months-old babies who had not previously been given any food but milk "were allowed to eat what they preferred from a wide variety of natural foods: whole milk, both sweet or sour, and buttermilk; hard-cooked eggs; various meats, fish and fish roe; a variety of cooked cereals; fruit juices and raw and cooked vegetables and fruits. No food was salted, but salt was kept on the trays so that any child might take as much as he desired. Foods were not combined in any way; for example, grains were served only as a cereal, not as bread." The account continues:

The children were fed separately and were not allowed to watch while others ate; imitation, therefore, was ruled out. Although a nurse was with each child during his meals, no attempt was made to offer his food . . . .

Many interesting points were brought out by this experiment. For example, one baby was allergic to egg white; this child carefully separated yolks from white, ate the yolks, and tossed the whites on the floor. All of the children went on food binges. They would sometimes drink quarts of milk one day and eat little else; the next day they would perhaps scarcely taste milk. One child ate eleven eggs at one meal; another ate thirteen bananas at one time. Again and again certain foods would be avoided for a period and then eaten heartily. The salt would sometimes not be touched for days and then eaten by the handful, even though the children grimaced as they ate it. On one day a child would perhaps eat little food of any kind, the next day he might eat tremendous quantities. Taken on the basis of day to day, the diets were lopsided indeed. When the total food consumption over a period of months was studied, however, it was found that the children ate foods supplying the nutrients they needed. No child was ill during the experiment or suffered the slightest deviation from health. Not one child had even a mild cold; none was constipated. In fact, all the children became unusually healthy.

Both mothers and dieticians, Miss Davis suggests, can learn a great deal from this experiment. It reveals, for instance, that the natural instincts of the body will take care of most health problems, provided the parent knows what healthful food is and manages to see that enough kinds of it are provided in the household—and, according to Miss Davis, if the children are not given foods like refined sugar, white flour, etc., which, she claims, upset the natural instincts of food selection. The logic supporting this proviso is that the child's stomach is relatively small, his appetite being satisfied with small amounts of food, and when he is given foods that do not contain the energy and health building elements, more valuable food is crowded out.

Miss Davis' book encourages, in every way possible, an easing of nervous tension on the part of anxious parents, and cautions against nagging

the children. Even the missing of a meal, she says, is in no sense serious if the right foods are available in the home, for the child will tend to make up the loss by a larger intake at a later time. Further, the forcing of foods upon children simply builds up their distaste for those particular foods, and may produce more rebelliousness in general. According to Miss Davis, if the child does not like vegetables, he should never be given more than a tiny portion, it being quite possible that his digestive system instinctively rejects vegetables because they are hard to assimilate during the earliest years. A small portion of whatever vegetable the family eats would be sufficient to give the child to try, without encouraging waste if the child rejects it.

This seems an excellent idea, and one suggesting an entire regime of child-rearing psychology. Food needs to be appreciated, and, as with all things, appreciation is best learned during scarcity. If the child is given but a small amount of food, and eats and *enjoys* it, he will probably gain more than if he were coaxed or bullied into eating most of some huge pile on his plate which is both beyond his initial desire and his actual capacity.

Miss Davis also points out that faulty eating habits of parents are major causes of faulty eating habits in children, and that these practices often have much more to do with the *manner* of eating than with the food itself. If the family rises too late in the morning and is principally concerned about getting the child to school in a hurry—or the father to work—the prevailing atmosphere will be one of tension and anxiety. The natural appetite of the child can be easily constricted in such surroundings. As Miss Davis says; "At least a mother can sit down and have a pleasant, leisurely meal with her children if she is willing to make the effort to do so. It is up to her to set the example."

A child needs to *participate* in a meal to the fullest extent possible. In order to do this he must *enjoy* both the occasion and the food, and he

cannot enjoy what is forced upon him. We should like to add to Miss Davis' recommendations the suggestion that the child be allowed to do something about the preparation of the meal. However small the task, if it is an integral part of readying the meal, such work is not only a preparation of food but a preparation for appreciation and responsibility. Even four or five-year-old children can do something to help, and might even be able to prepare a very simple meal entirely by themselves—an accomplishment of which they will be considerably proud, even if they happen to be boys.

The increasing study of diet has, it seems to us, both symbolic and philosophical value. How much each one of us needs to know about himself, how many "laws" are actually operative in relation to our environment, are questions in need of investigation. So, while present emphasis upon food-study has created a few dictatorial dieticians whose decrees are followed by some people with almost religious devotion, the total effect is undoubtedly toward an increase of *self*-study. And anything tending in this direction is as good for us as it is good for our children.

## FRONTIERS

### "Yoga" the West Can Appreciate

THE editors of adventure magazines are, we suppose, as apt as anyone to sense a trend of popular interest, often helping to point the way to more dignified trend-finders such as this Department now and then attempts to be. In any event, *Argosy* for July offers its readers an astonishing article on the sight of a blindfolded man, under the rather misleading title, "The Amazing Eyes of Kuda Bux." Interest in the psychic or "occult" side of human life, of which this article is an illustration, has greatly accelerated during recent years. The periodicals devoted to such subjects grow more numerous every year, and all the large cities of the United States have at least one or two booksellers who specialize in psychic subjects. (Los Angeles, of course, is practically the Psychic Capital of the country, with far more than its quota of crystal-gazers, and wardens and prophets of the spirit-world, so that such inclinations acquire an inevitable exaggeration in this area; but the commercial success of national magazines exploiting curiosity about the "psychic" shows that the development is by no means a regional affair.)

*Argosy's* venture into the occult is carefully hedged with editorial questioning—"Some of us think Kuda Bux has supernatural powers, and some of us don't"—as it probably ought to be, for *Argosy*, representing the he-man cult of adventure, can hardly afford to join an entirely different kind of cult with practically no warning to its readers. Yet Mr. Kuda Bux, a forty-seven-year-old Indian from Kashmir, has exactly the background to be featured in *Argosy*. Years ago, when he proved to the satisfaction of a jury of psychic experts from the University of London Council that he could walk twenty-five feet over red-hot coals (800 degrees F.) without even singeing the epidermis, Kuda Bux became known the world over as a successful "fire-walker." Today, after years of practice, he exhibits his recently perfected capacity to see—even to read a book through—with his eyes completely covered. When questioned about what he can "see through," he explains: "I cannot see through anything. . . . My

eyes themselves are not in use at all." It is a matter, he says, of developing an "inner sense of sight," and he tells in considerable detail how he went about it.

One thing about Kuda Bux that probably pleased the *Argosy* editors very much is his disarming disclaimer that his powers are any sort of religious specialty. In the brief autobiographical account quoted in *Argosy*, he tells how from a boy he longed to perform feats of "magic." After disillusionment with a traveling "professor" of magic who turned out to be a fraud, Kuda Bux resolved to study the secrets of yoga. He was then barely fourteen years old. His motives were quite simple:

"Religious? No, I was not religious. It is, of course, true that the yogi himself is always fanatically religious, but that was not how I felt about it. I was, in a way, what you would call an imposter, a little bit of a cheat, because for me the idea was not religion, or seclusion or abstinence, but the exact opposite. I wanted to acquire yoga powers for two reasons and two reasons only: Fame and Fortune. Now this was something that the true yogi would despise more than anything else in the world, so I knew that if I was to have any chance of success I should have to pretend to be an extraordinarily religious man.

Whether through pretenses of this sort or not, Kuda Bux was able to find a teacher who started him off on physical exercises. Not satisfied with this, he asked for instruction in mental powers. The yogi finally agreed, promising that after about fifteen years of effort, Kuda Bux might be able to concentrate his mind "upon any one subject you select for at least three and a half minutes."

This rather marginal hope did not discourage Kuda Bux, who began to practice concentration every evening, until his mind grew tired. He was now a professional conjuror. One day, after giving a performance in Dacca, in East Bengal, he witnessed a fire-walking demonstration. When the fire-walker asked for volunteers to duplicate the feat, Kuda Bux was one of four who risked the ordeal. While the other three were badly burned, he crossed the hot coals without acquiring a blister. As he tells it:

"I try to remember my lessons. I concentrate my conscious mind upon one thing: *upon the fire being cold*. This fire is cold fire, I say. It will not burn me. I concentrate to such a degree that I see nothing

except the fire and the fire being cold. And behold, I walk across it and I am not burned at all."

That is how Kuda Bux got into fire-walking. His seeing without the use of his eyes is another skill which he attributes to the power of concentration. He kept on trying to see without using his eyes until, finally, he did! He thinks that he sees through the pores of his skin, although he is not quite sure how it works. In the *Argosy* office, his interrogators placed a book behind a metal door, and it was only when Kuda Bux reached his hand around on the other side of the door, about two feet from the open page, that he was able to read. (The blindfolding techniques adopted by the experimenters seem to rule out any sort of "peeking." Kuda Bux's eyes were first covered with soft dough, and then closely bandaged. In some tests, the investigators covered his eyes with metal foil and even sealed the lids closed with collodion, and to rule out the possibility of thought-transference, they asked him to read books they had never seen.) When his act was playing the Hippodrome, Kuda Bux rode around New York's streets on a bicycle, completely blindfolded, nodding cheerfully at bewildered policemen and waving at the crowds which soon formed along the curb. That night the Hippodrome was completely sold out, so that Mr. Bux ought by now to have achieved his aim of Fortune, as well as that of Fame.

Among his other attainments, Kuda Bux, like Hadad (of *My Six Convicts*) can stop his heart from beating at will. This was verified by electro-cardiograph as well as by the doctor who took his pulse. However, as the *Argosy* writer remarks, "To the doctors, the heart-stopping merely attested to extraordinary muscular control. But the business of seeing without the eyes was something that confused them terribly. Scientifically, it was impossible. Yet they had to admit that Kuda Bux could do it."

The *Argosy* editors declare that Kuda Bux is a fascinating man, and we can agree that his accomplishments move in that direction. But what shall we make of such things? *Argosy* makes a good story of them, the doctors scratch their heads, and Kuda Bux makes a good living out of what he says himself is the mere technology of yoga powers. There are other possibilities. What if Kuda Bux's

modest summary of "yoga" were based on fact—and there are, indeed, inner senses as well as the outer ones which are dependent upon the physical organs of sensation? In such inner senses, perhaps, we would have the beginnings of a scientific explanation of those powers and faculties investigated by modern psychic researchers—telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, telekinesis, and the like.

While we doubt that very many Westerners will have the patience to imitate Kuda Bux's long years of practice, there have been a few Europeans with similar patience. J. W. Dunne, the British inventor, recounts in *An Experiment with Time* how he trained himself to interpret his own prophetic dreams; and how, after a stint of special effort, he found himself able to anticipate passages, pages ahead, in books he was reading.

It takes no great effort to discover that there are plenty of "psychic phenomena" around, waiting to be understood. We lack the theories to explain them, and so, for the most part, they have been ignored. If Kuda Bux, along with gaining Fame and Fortune for himself, can set people to thinking about the meaning of psychic phenomena, he will have accomplished something important, after all. And if, through his example, people can learn to separate any sort of wondrous happenings, whether learnedly called "psychic phenomena," or simply "miracles," from religion, he will have accomplished much more.