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WITHOUT AN ANGRY SYLLABLE

IN *The Meaning of Shakespeare* Harold Goddard suggests, more than whimsically, that in losing the great battle of Actium in 21 B.C., Mark Antony failed as a soldier but grew as a man, leaving the world a great and moving tale, the story of Antony and Cleopatra—including Shakespeare's play. "The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in." The tellers of great stories are the shapers of minds, while battles only determine the shape of kingdoms. Kingdoms are but brief episodes of history, memorable only if they become the source of influential stories which give direction to human development.

This is the case for utopian romances, well put by Arthur Morgan in *Nowhere Was Somewhere* (Chapel Hill, 1946), a book which traces the utopias of literature to their source in history. He wrote:

> In the field of actual government and social order, for long periods to come the social patterns men live by will be those which their dynamic but none too original-minded leaders find lying about ready for use. It has been the work of utopians, borrowing from earlier utopians, from their actual experience, and from information about society, to select the most excellent elements from all recorded experience, to add whatever they can of creative originality, and to combine those elements into a design for society which will commend itself to the judgment of men.
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> The trouble with human society has been, not too much attention to utopias, but too little. Had the quest for a good society been more universal, more objective, more critical and discriminating, then the crude social systems presented to the world by popular heroes would seem naive and unconvincing and would not gain the credulous loyalty of great masses. Where utopias have been held in highest and most discriminating regard, there society has been at its best. A knowledge of the history and characteristics of utopias is essential to anyone who would take part in the refashioning of political, social, and economic institutions. They constitute one of the greatest reservoirs of human experience and aspiration.

Condemned as futile dreams by the hard-headed utopias, from the days of Greater Greece to the present, have given birth to constitutions, as Morgan shows. Harrington's *Oceana*, he says, "appears to have contributed substantially, not only to the federal Constitution, but, at an earlier date, to the constitutions of several of the thirteen states." In the preface to his *Edward Bellamy* (Columbia University Press, 1944), Morgan said:

> It was the genius of Edward Bellamy that he took Utopia out of the region of hazy dreamland and made it a concrete program for the actual modern world. A reviewer of *Looking Backward* wrote: "Men read the Republic or the Utopia with a sigh of regret. They read Bellamy with a thrill of hope." His picture of a better world, and the hope and expectation of its fulfillment, were transmitted through the years until those who looked to him as the source of their initial inspiration constituted an important part of the army of social progress.

Morgan's list of eminent men who spoke of how much Bellamy influenced them gives ample support to this claim. John Dewey, Charles Beard, Thorstein Veblen, and William Allen White are among them, and Mark Twain's A *Connecticut Yankee* was written under the influence of *Looking Backward.* According to Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw's biographer, "Shaw followed in Bellamy's footsteps."

The story in *Looking Backward* is simple enough. An affluent young Bostonian, Julian West, of thirty years in 1887, suffered from insomnia, and gained the services of a mesmerist to obtain needed sleep. His bedroom was a vault beneath his home, isolated and soundproof. One night, when he lay soothed into trance-like sleep, fire broke out and his house was reduced to ashes.

Undisturbed in his (ventilated) vault, he slept for a century, and was finally discovered by accident by a doctor who revived and returned him to health. The transformation of society during this long interval makes the substance of the book, of which West learns from the good doctor and his charming daughter, and by personal observation.

In their first serious conversation, West asks his host, Dr. Leete, if the inhabitants of the United States (the time was the year 2000) had solved "the labor question." The doctor replies that the solution came through the process of industrial evolution. "All that society had to do was to recognize and cooperate with that evolution, when its tendency became unmistakable." The precipitating cause of the change was, the doctor explained, the concentration of capital in a few powerful hands. Dr. Leete provides a concise historical summary:

> Before this concentration began, while as yet commerce and industry were conducted by innumerable petty concerns with small capital, instead of a small number of great concerns with vast capital, the individual workman was relatively important and independent in his relations to the employer. Moreover, when a little capital or a new idea was enough to start a man in business for himself, workingmen were constantly becoming employers and there was no hard and fast line between the two classes. Labor unions were needless then, and general strikes out of the question. But when the era of small concerns with small capital was succeeded by that of the great aggregations of capital, all this was changed. The individual laborer who had been relatively important to the small employer was reduced to insignificance and powerlessness over against the great corporation, while, at the same time, the way upward to the grade of employer was closed to him. Self-defense drove him to union with his fellows. . . . Looking back, we cannot wonder at their desperation, for certainly humanity was never confronted with a fate more sordid and hideous than would have been the era of corporate tyranny which they anticipated.

Now comes what amounts to a rather accurate account of the present. Dr. Leete goes on:

> Meanwhile, without being in the smallest degree checked by the clamor against it, the absorption of business by ever larger monopolies continued. In the United States, where this tendency was later in developing than in Europe, there was not, after the beginning of the last quarter of the century, any opportunity whatever for individual enterprise in any important field of industry, unless backed by a great capital. During the last decade of the century, such small businesses as still remained were fast failing survivals of a past epoch, or mere parasites on the great corporations, or else existed in fields too small to attract the great capitalist. Small businesses, as far as they still remained, were reduced to the condition of rats and mice, living in holes and corners, and counting on evading notice for the enjoyment of existence. The railroads had gone on combining till a few great syndicates controlled every rail in the land. In manufactories, every important staple was controlled by a syndicate. These syndicates, pools, trusts, or whatever their name, fixed prices and crushed all competition except when combinations as vast as themselves arose. Then a struggle, resulting in a still greater consolidation, ensued. The great city bazaar crushed its country rivals with branch stores, and in the city itself absorbed its smaller rivals till the business of a whole quarter was concentrated under one roof with a hundred former proprietors of shops serving as clerks.

The rich, of course, became richer and the poor poorer, but a return to more primitive economic arrangements was not sought because of the manifest efficiencies of the large industrial and commercial units. The price of dignity and freedom, if sought in a return to the equality of conditions which had prevailed in the past, would be "general poverty and the arrest of material progress." Dr. Leete continued:

> Was there, then, no way of commanding the services of the mighty wealth-producing principle of consolidated capital, without bowing down to a plutocracy like that of Carthage? As soon as men began to ask themselves these questions, they found the answer ready for them. The movement toward the conduct of business by larger and larger aggregations of capital, the tendency toward monopolies, which had been desperately and vainly resisted, was recognized at last, in its true significance, as a process which only needed to complete its logical evolution to open a golden future to humanity.

What would bring about that "golden future," the blessings of which were plainly evident by the year 2000? The doctor's answer, in the terms of present-day usage, was the Corporate State!

> Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed: it became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economics of which all citizens shared. In a word, the people of the United States concluded to assume the conduct of their own business, just as one hundred odd years before they had assumed the conduct of their own government, organizing now for industrial purposes on precisely the same grounds on which they had then organized for political ends.

Great bloodshed, Julian West thought, must have attended such a change.

> On the contrary [replied Dr. Leete], there was absolutely no violence. The change had been long foreseen. Public opinion had become fully ripe for it, and the whole mass of people was behind it. There was no more possibility of opposing it by force than by argument. On the other hand the popular sentiment toward the great corporations and those identified with them had ceased to be one of bitterness, as they came to realize their necessity as a link, a transition of the true industrial system. The most violent foes of the great private monopolies were now forced to recognize how invaluable and indispensable had been their office in educating the people up to the point of assuming control of their own business.

It was the corporations themselves, with their multiple efficiencies, which made the proposal of a single national corporation acceptable to all. The principle of "universal military service" was applied to the labor force, and since there was no alternative to becoming part of this organization, with opportunities for every sort of work, and automatic retirement for all at forty-five, there were no complaints. After listening to Dr. Leete explain the social transformation in detail, with description of the spontaneous corporation that seemed to result, West remarked that "Human nature itself must have changed very much."

> "Not at all," was Dr. Leete's reply, "but the conditions of human life have changed, and with them the motives of human action. The organization of society no longer offers a premium on baseness. But these are matters which you can only understand as you come, with time, to know us better."

Yet "the organization of society" in Bellamy's Utopia presents, at least to us, striking parallels with the organization of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. These were "organic" states, a form of organization celebrated by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Law* in which "the State is the self-determining and the completely sovereign will, the final decision being necessarily referred to it." How could such an organization, based as it was on a military model (as a youth Bellamy had tried to enroll at West Point, and was rejected because of physical inadequacy), exercise so universal an appeal? The reasons seem several. Of his work one reviewer said after his death that "by clothing the Ideal in the apparel of the Real, he inspired us with a hope of its speedy attainment. It was this note of hope, the hope which his gospel had brought to his own soul, that took the world by storm." Then, as Morgan points out in his biography of Bellamy, the unification of opinion shown to have been accomplished in *Looking Backward* was achieved not by political compulsion or by dictatorship, "but by an intense though informal revival of interest in human values, and by the processes of peaceful and voluntary action on the part of large numbers." Morgan adds:

> It is to his credit, also, that he indicates great restraint in the dissemination of official ideas. In his utopia agreement arises out of experience and education, rather than from imposed dicta. The processes of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin may seem more rapid, but the process of Bellamy, which to a

> considerable degree expresses the genius of American idealism, is sounder and more persistent. It provides a freer play of outlooks and less arbitrary suppression of elements which may have great value, but which are slow in maturing.

One quality pervades *Looking Backward*, and this, plus the ingenious and sagacious practical arrangements—Morgan calls them "social engineering"—accounts for the extraordinary appeal and influence of the book. In reply to a casual remark by West, Dr. Leete says: "If I were to give you, in one sentence, a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age, I should say that it is the fact that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases, are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity." The effect on readers of this spirit is revealed by the editorial statement of a Nebraska magazine which changed its name to the *Bellamy Review*, giving this explanation:

> No man has done as much as Edward Bellamy to open the eyes of the people to that vision of social justice and goodwill which every prophet has beheld.
>
> Without uttering an angry syllable he has shown the horrors of the struggle for wealth.
>
> Without ceasing for a moment to be guided by common sense, he has given us a picture of society as it might be, if it were based on equality and labor.
>
> Without the use of a word the ordinary reader could not understand, he has made plain certain economic laws which professors and philosophers have vainly tried to make clear, either to other people or to themselves.

These, then, are some of the reasons why Bellamy affected the lives and gave form to the hopes of so many in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They were moved by the vision and warmth of his thinking, infected by his confidence, and strengthened in their own undertakings by the cogence of his reasoning.

In addition to the capacity of Bellamy to give inspiration, Morgan finds him uniquely endowed with a fine sense of "legislative design." This ability, Morgan says, gave immediate value to his contribution.

> Had Bellamy set up an office in Washington to be of service to members of Congress in drafting legislation, he might have become a national institution as clearly unique as Thomas Edison or Gilbert and Sullivan. Where the art of designing legislation is studied, as it should be (and usually is not) in law schools, *Looking Backward* and *Equality* might well be used as texts to illustrate the exercise of skill in relating means to ends. Very often Bellamy is so skillful that his methods are not quickly obvious. Only a careful study of *Looking Backward* and *Equality* disclose the rare quality of creative imagination.

However, Morgan turns this appreciation into a criticism of Bellamy's anticipations:

> Bellamy's ability in this respect was also his weakness. The writer has known an exceptionally competent engineer whose unfailing ingenuity in meeting difficulties resulted in his doing: his work with great economy. However, when he estimated the cost of work to be done under the supervision of others, he would expect the same ingenuity and economy to be exercised, and as a result his estimates were habitually too low until he deliberately corrected that weakness. So Bellamy, in thinking of the administration of his new social state, assumed that the rare creative ingenuity which he possessed would characterize legislation and administration. He did not imagine how stupid and uncreative man can be, and with how little imagination the world is governed.

In other words, the utopian writer's leap beyond both the prevailing practice and the prevailing capacity of the existing society is both the weakness and the strength of his work. No blueprint of an ideal future will ever work out as planned because the utopian—because he must—omits the mysterious transformations of character which must take place on a large scale before an actual realization of any ideal plan can occur. This omission is the magical ingredient of the utopias, allowing them to reach far in advance of the existing society, yet exciting the potentiality for vision in their readers. The gift of Bellamy was to stir this capacity, helping people to keep their large-hearted dreams alive.

What of the socio-economic arrangements proposed? If vision is the important thing, then the first requirement of the arrangements is that they do not stultify high thinking and dreaming. They must be of a sort that help to release aspiration and not get in its way. If the qualities of fellow feeling and cooperation have full play, then the best in human beings may find way to expression, and such ways, taken together, grow into habits and customs of an ideal society. Projects animated by such attitudes will often convert unwieldy and difficult undertakings into notable successes, overcoming even stubborn psychological obstacles.

This was Dr. Leete's claim for the arrangements of *Looking Backward.* He told West that "the conditions of life have changed, and with them the motives of human action." He meant that the arrangements which had been installed brought out the best in human beings.

This is the claim with which present-day readers will have the most difficulty. While Morgan assembles a number of criticisms of *Looking Backward,* Dr. Leete's insistence "as an axiom that the larger the business the simpler the principles that can be applied to it" seems the most open to objection. The best rejoinder to Dr. Leete is found in the work of a practical utopian of our own time, E. F. Schumacher, who said:

> One of our fundamental needs is to be able to act in accordance with our moral impulses. In a big organization our freedom to do so is inevitably severely restricted. . . . big organizations often behave very badly, very immorally, very stupidly and inhumanely, not because the people inside them are any of these things but simply because the organization carries the load of bigness. [A society] becomes immoral if its structure is such that moral individuals cannot act in accordance with their moral impulses. And one method of achieving this dreadful result is by letting organizations become too large.

With all his psychological insight, Bellamy seems to have overlooked this "axiom." He wrote, however, in the nineteenth century; the lessons of the twentieth century lay far ahead.

REVIEW
A TASTE FOR BREAD

IN a dramatic and flowing passage in *Merchants of Grain* (Penguin, 1980), Dan Morgan describes the sudden growth of the grain business in recent years, showing why this vast multinational undertaking deserved a carefully written book about how it is conducted. He says in his first chapter:

> Before World War II, the amount of grain that crossed borders, or oceans, seldom exceeded 30 million tons a year. By 1975, this figure reached nearly 160 million tons, a growth only slightly less spectacular than the growth of the oil trade. Countries such as Russia and India, which once exported grain, have become big importers. Developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have begun importing wheat on a major scale for the first time. Rice-eating people have acquired a taste for bread, and governments find it expedient to satisfy this taste. Bread has become the ideal food for the millions who have been migrating to the cities from the countryside, away from their traditional food supplies. One by one, countries have plugged into the global system of commercial grain-trading. By the 1970s, imported wheat was a costly factor in the trade of dozens of nations and one that often diverted foreign exchange from other uses, including investments in domestic agriculture.

The eating habits of many people have been altered as a result—a change, as shown by Lappé and Collins in *Food First*, which often leads to luxury for the few and hunger for the many. Dan Morgan says:

> In the richer countries, people copy the American diet. They eat more meat from grain-fed beef, hogs, and poultry, and less tomatoes, bread, or rice. Trendy young Japanese consume "jyamba baga" (jumbo burgers) at "Macudonarado's" and affluent South Americans step into restaurants serving American-style fried chicken under giant plastic statues of the ubiquitous Colonel Sanders. Fast-food chains have gone international. These food habits all require vastly greater supplies of grain. By the early 1970s, *animals* ate up about as much of the world's annual harvest of wheat, corn barley, oats, rye, and sorghum as humans did. Livestock and poultry in just two countries—the United States and the Soviet Union—consumed one bushel out of five of *all* this annual harvest of grain.

Who buys and sells all these grain food crops? That is the subject of Dan Morgan's book. The answer is five companies which are family-owned and family-run, and operate in virtual secrecy.

> What distinguishes the grain multinationals from their corporate contemporaries is their uniquely private structure. Seven families are all-powerful: The Fribourgs at Continental; the Hirshes and Borns at Bunge; the Cargills and Macmillans at Cargill, and the Louis-Dreyfuses and Andres at the companies with those names. Members of these families not only own most of the stock of the companies, but also serve as board chairmen, presidents, and chief executives at each of them. It is as if the Rockefeller family were still in absolute, day-to-day control of Exxon, or the Carnegies still dictated every major decision of U.S. Steel.

The size of the concerns is almost unbelievable:

> These five companies have grown, diversified, spread their operations to almost every continent and country so successfully that by the time most Americans heard of them for the first time, during the grain sales to Russia in 1972, the firms were among the world's largest multinational corporations. Cargill and Continental probably rank as the two largest privately held companies in the United States, and Bunge may be one of the largest in the world. Cargill's annual net profits from its worldwide operations exceeded those of Goodyear Tire and Rubber in 1974 and 1975, and its annual sales are greater than those of Sears, Roebuck.

The companies have interests in banking, shipping, real estate, hotels, paint and glass manufacturing, mining, steel plants, cattle ranches, flour milling, animal feed processing and commodity brokerage. Bunge has an estimated 50,000 employees, mainly centered in its paint, textile, food-processing, and milling plants in Argentina and Brazil, but scattered around the world, too. And the companies run their own intelligence services all over the planet—private news agencies that never print a word.

The companies perform their economic functions with a skill approaching commercial genius. Governments are unable to replace their operations. For the reader, *Merchants of Grain* has many passages which read like an adventure story, and there is great romance in the development of these firms, some of them a century old. Engrossing for the reader is the kind of world of commerce which has developed around us, decisively affecting the conduct of our lives.

Mr. Morgan is not a moralist. He calls no names. Many of his judgments are illustrated in the following passage:

> Certainly there *are* strong arguments in favor of the companies. They *are* efficient, and they *do* provide international services and take risks that nobody else does. They are progressive in their transcending of nationalism, their view of the planet as a single entity, and they even bridge the world's adversarial ideological blocs. The companies, say their admirers, are the most efficient organizations ever devised for transferring resources and wealth among countries. When the state takes over, a whole new set of problems comes to mind—inefficiency, bureaucracy, and managers who are subservient to political pressures.
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> However, in the absence of effective supervision or governmental guidance for the transnational firms—in the absence, in fact, of much hard data on their activities—national interests can get lost in the shuffle. Huge corporations cannot and do not make decisions on the basis of what is in the best interests of the countries where they are represented. This is not to say the companies always act against these best interests. It is just that the companies have a different set of interests from those of individual nations. And because of their immense wealth and their global operations, they can do things that harm a country without any special costs to them. The diversion of wheat away from Zaire does not have much effect on Continental's internal balance, but the repercussions in Zaire are cataclysmic.

Morgan thinks a public grain board that would price and allocate grain resources would be a good thing. This, he says, "would protect American consumers and livestock producers against the impact of large disruptive purchases of grain here by foreigners and would equip the United States with stronger leverage in negotiating long-term access to oil and other foreign resources. He concludes:

> The American government's relationship to business and the economy is still modeled on an era when there seemed some hope that the ideology of free trade and free markets would triumph. That, unfortunately, has not come to pass. So the question is whether agricultural policymakers will deal with the world as it really is or continue to deal with it as they wish it could have been.

All those who have the longing or hope to change the world need to read this book as one means of realizing the dimensions of the problem. Changing the world means changing long-established habits and tastes. The multinationals are finely tuned mechanisms which operate in behalf of self-interest. Creating a world in which other motives may prevail—have a *chance* to prevail—is surely the first step, but where, for this, do you begin?

Merchants of Grain is an education in the profound complexity of our economic life. Morgan says:

> To understand fully this power of the major grain companies all over the world, it is essential to examine the structure of the grain business in the United States, the largest single reservoir of surplus grain anywhere. . . . As spring turns into summer, the harvest wheels north, from the Texas panhandle in May to the Dakotas and southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan in September. The American farm country is a mosaic of corn, soybeans, barley (for malting), sunflower seeds (for cooking oil), flaxseed (for paint). Each crop can be further broken down into components that go into different products and therefore move through different chains in the market. For example, some corn goes into plants that produce starch or corn sweeteners, and some is destined for the whiskey stills of Cincinnati. Wheat also has its specialized markets: The "bread" wheats of Kansas and Oklahoma are likely to go to the Kansas City flour mills, while the durum wheats that grow in the Dakotas go to mills that make flour for macaroni and other pastas in Buffalo. The soft-kerneled wheats from Ohio and Indiana are ideal for cookies, which determines their route to markets.

> With the advent of huge poultry industries in the southeastern states, corn and soybeans that once stayed in the Midwest to feed hogs are now hauled by freight trains in great volumes to Georgia and Arkansas. Vast quantities of these crops also move on the Santa Fe Railroad and other major grain carriers to the cattle feed lots of the Southwest.

The multinationals have moved in on these activities. As the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in a report in 1975. "U.S. grain exporting is dominated by five companies that account for about 85 per cent of the total volume." It is the same overseas. In 1974, Morgan relates, "the Big Five handled 90 per cent of the Common Market's trade in wheat and corn, 90 per cent of Canada's barley exports, 80 per cent of Argentina's wheat exports, and 90 per cent of Australia's grain sorghum exports." While some countries have public wheat boards to sell their grain, "all governments still continue to rely heavily on multinational grain companies to organize the distribution, process the grain into usable commodities, and provide financing for vast movements of grain around the world." It seems fair to say that the grain merchants illustrate the market system at its efficient best. The story of its exploitive worst is told in *Food First.*

COMMENTARY
THE COMING "MORALITY"

IN this week's Frontiers, the exclamation of Prof. Commager, after a quotation from John Adams' constitution of Massachusetts, "Imagine any constitution-makers writing that today!", calls for some reflection. It is true enough that modern legislators would be disinclined to use "the exalted vocabulary" employed by the Founding Fathers, but this withdrawal from the morally charged words of the eighteenth century involves something more than indifference to the higher human qualities. Today, talk of "virtue" seems to imply a moral ostentation which we find somewhat embarrassing. It is as though we have yet to evolve a language of the virtues which gets rid of the nuances of self-righteousness, yet preserves the meaning of terms which came naturally two hundred years ago.

Humanistic psychologists such as Maslow, Rogers, and May have made a beginning in this direction, but a spontaneous diction reflecting, say, the ancient Greek meaning of *areté,* is still far from being achieved. According to Catherine Roberts, this practically untranslatable term stands for the idea that "every living organism, human and nonhuman, possesses a potential of supreme excellence characteristic of the group to which it belonged." Applied to humans, *areté* suggests a fulfillment of moral responsibility which differentiates human excellence from that of non-self-conscious intelligence. The spirit of Dr. Roberts' inquiry suggests that the moral language of the future will be a natural blend of man's intuitive conceptions with the discipline and impersonality of science. She says:

> Man's conscious awareness of his conscience, the divine ethic, and his self-transcendence as a realizable human potential *does* set *Homo sapiens* apart from other creatures. And precisely because of his spiritual uniqueness, he has a responsibility to help lower beings to ascend that exceeds any responsibility to them based on a sense of physical relation through common descent.

If, .then, when "touched by the better angels of our nature," we are led to develop words which associate moral obligation with natural law, we should be able to use such language without embarrassment. Happily, "the brotherhood of man" and "the brotherhood of life" are current expressions natural to us because they are so understood.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TEACHER-WATCHER'S REPORT

ANECDOTE seems far better than theory when it comes to the art of teaching. At any rate, our attention flags at about the second paragraph of theory—unless the theory is by Leibniz or Lessing, and then there are other problems such as thinking continuously in abstract terms. So it was with particular pleasure that we came across a chapter on Peter Drucker's experience in the fourth grade (in Vienna) of two lady teachers (in Drucker's *Adventures of a Bystander*). They were Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy. Elsa was the school principal and Drucker's homeroom teacher. Sophy taught arts and crafts. Of Sophy the author says:

> She resided in a big, crowded, colorful studio room, which no one ever saw her leave. One side was fixed up for the arts, with easels, crayons, brushes, watercolors, and clay, and with lots of colored gum paper for cutting out—this was before finger paints. Another side was the craft shop, with child-size sewing machines (with foot treadles, of course, if only to make them more attractive to children), and long rows of hand tools, saws, pliers, drills, hammers, and planes in a small but complete woodworking shop. And along a third wall were pots and pans, and a big sink.

The time of Drucker's fourth-grade adventure was toward the end of or just after the first world war. Miss Sophy was "child-centered," Drucker says.

> I cannot recall one moment when she did not have a girl or boy sitting in her lap; even the big fifth-graders who so much wanted to be "manly" were not a bit ashamed to cry on her shoulder. But they also came running to her with their joys and triumphs; and Miss Sophy was always ready with a pat, a kiss, a word of encouragement or congratulations. But she never, never remembered the name of a child, even though she had most of them as pupils for five years, for arts and crafts were taught in every grade and she was the only arts and crafts teacher in the school. It was always "Child"—I don't think, by the way, that Miss Sophy knew whether she was talking to a boy or a girl, nor did she care, I imagine. For Miss Sophy held the then quite revolutionary doctrine that boys should know how to sew and cook, and girls should use tools and know how to fix things. Sometimes she ran into parental opposition, as when she asked each mother to send a pair of stockings with holes in them to school so that we could learn how to darn, "to teach coordination between eye and hand," as she explained. A good many mothers were offended. "We have no stockings with holes in *this* house," they would write back. "Fiddlesticks," Miss Sophy replied, "in a house with a normal nine year old there are always holey stockings."

This is occasion for a kind word about "theory," since Miss Sophie, Drucker says, had come under the influence of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), who held that the crafts were an essential part of elementary education. Miss Sophy defied the conventional belief that there was "something subversive in girls using a plane and boys a darning needle."

Now for our anti-climactic anecdote:

> For three weeks Miss Sophy would let us try things, always willing to help but never offering advice or criticism. Then she said to me: "You aren't much interested in painting or modeling in clay, are you?" "I'm not good at it," was my reply. "No, you certainly aren't. But by the end of this year you will be able to use simple hand tools. How about starting out by making a milking stool for your mother?" I was somewhat taken aback. "We don't have any cows," I stammered. "Why would my mother want a milking stool?" "Because it's about the only thing you could possibly make," said Miss Sophy tartly. The answer made sense to me, though I doubted whether I could indeed even make a milking stool.

Both Sophy and young Peter were right. His milking stool was an off-balance mess. He was obviously destined to be a story-teller, not a carpenter. No one taught him to write; he taught himself; but these two ladies were able to teach him to rely on his own judgment and they knew how to get out of the way of his development in his chosen direction. Miss Elsa's approach makes this clear:

> When the school year started, in September, Miss Elsa told us that we would have two to three weeks of quizzes and tests to see how much we knew. This sounded frightening but turned out to be fun. For Miss Elsa made us grade ourselves or grade each

other. At the end of three weeks she had an individual conference with each of us. "Sit down next to me," she would say, "and tell me what you do well." I told her. "And now," she said, "tell me what you do badly." "Yes," she said, "you are right, you read well. In fact reading rats like you don't need work on reading, and I haven't scheduled any for you. You keep on reading what you want to read. Only, Peter, make sure that you have good light and don't strain your eyes. You're reading under the desk when you think I'm not looking, always read on top of the desk. I am moving you to a desk next to the big windows so that you have enough light. And you spell well and don't need any spelling drill. Only learn to look up words and don't guess when you don't know. And," she added, "you know you left out one of your strengths—you know what it is?" I shook my head. "You are very good in composition, but you haven't had enough practice. Do you agree?" I nodded. "All right, let's make that a goal. Let's say you write two compositions a week, one for which you tell me what you want to write about, one for which I give you a topic. And," she continued, "you underrate your performance in arithmetic. You are actually good—so good that I propose that this year you learn all the arithmetic the lower grades teach, that is, fractions, percentages, and logarithms—you'll like logarithms, they're clever. Then you'll be able to do the mathematics they teach in the upper grades, geometry and algebra."

Peter said that other teachers found fault with his work in arithmetic.

"Of course," she replied. "Your results are poor. But not because you don't know arithmetic. They are poor because you are terribly sloppy and don't check. You don't make more mistakes than the others, you just don't catch them. So you'll learn this year how to check—and to make sure you do, I'll ask you to check all the arithmetic work of the five children sitting in your row and the row ahead of you. But Peter, you aren't just 'poor' in handwriting, as you think you are. You're a total disgrace, and I won't have it in my class. It's going to hamper you. You like to write, but then no one can read what you've written. It's quite unnecessary; you can write a decent hand.

These two sisters—Elsa and Sophy—taught the children lots of things, no doubt. But most of all they taught responsibility and excellence. They used the extrinsic learning for intrinsic growth. In education, intrinsic learning is the kingdom of heaven, where all things are added unto you—all the needed extrinsic things.

Drucker is a great story-teller, and he maintains he never did improve his handwriting, but he did take charge of his life, as this book we have been quoting from—*Adventures of a Bystander* (Harper & Row, 1979)—makes vividly clear. Elsa and Sophy have a beneficent presence throughout its pages, his friendly Norns. As he says:

Without Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy in my memory, I would have resisted teaching myself. . . . Of course I did not think these thoughts consciously until much later. I felt them. But I also knew quite early, and consciously, what I had learned from Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy, and that it was more important than what they had failed to teach me and superior to anything the Gymnasium tried to teach me. To be sure, even Miss Sophy could not make a craftsman out of me, just as the greatest music teacher cannot make a musician out of someone who is tone deaf. But I took from her a lifelong appreciation of craftsmanship, an enjoyment of honest clean work, and respect for the task. My fingers have never forgotten the feel of well-planed and sanded wood, cut with rather than against the grain, which Miss Sophy—her hand on mine and guiding my fingers—made me sense. And Miss Elsa had given me a work discipline and the knowledge of how one organizes for performance, though I abused this skill for years. It enabled me to do absolutely no work in the Gymnasium for eight or nine months of the year, during which I pursued my own interests, whatever they were. Then when my teachers were sure that I would at least have to repeat the year, if not be thrown out altogether, I would dust off Miss Elsa's workbooks, set goals, and organize—and I would end the year in the upper third or quarter of the class simply by doing a little work for a few weeks in a purposeful, goal-directed fashion. This is how I still got my law doctorate when I was twenty-one or twenty-two. . . . Miss Elsa's workbook, workplans, and performance sheets were as effective in preparing myself for a grueling three-day oral and/or writing a dissertation as they had been for planning compositions a month ahead in fourth grade.

By reason of his experience with these two ladies, Peter Drucker became a teacher-watcher for the rest of his life.

FRONTIERS

Some Lost Words

WHILE Viktor Frankl warned in *The Unheard Cry for Meaning* that "the pursuit of happiness" is a contradiction in terms—that a pursued happiness brings self-defeat, happiness being something "that must ensue and cannot be pursued"—Henry Steele Commager (in the *Los Angeles Times* for Aug. 2) mourns the fact that "happiness" has dropped out of our public vocabulary. Yet perhaps the deeper meaning assigned to Happiness by George Washington in his Inaugural Address (quoted by Prof. Commager) shows what the word meant to eighteenth-century thinkers. Washington said: "There is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the course of Nature, an indissoluble bond between virtue and happiness," leading Commager to comment:

> Nothing more deeply agitated the mind of the generation of the Founding Fathers than the search for virtue. That search was more secular than religious, for to Washington, as to Jefferson, Adams, Tom Paine, George Mason and others, it was clear that republican government could not survive and flourish without virtue. Virtue meant subordinating private to public interest, and individualism to the community. It meant, in short, not private but public enterprise—just what it meant to philosopher-historian Alexis de Tocqueville half a century later.

Both happiness and virtue, along with "commonwealth" and "posterity," are gone from our vocabulary, Commager says. In the early days of the Republic, it was recognized that while government might be able to repress somewhat the corrupt activities of avaricious men, "ultimate reliance had to be on the virtue of the individual." He adds:

> This was not too fanciful a notion. After all, who could doubt the moral integrity of a Benjamin Franklin or a Washington? Nor has our history heretofore discouraged this confidence in moral integrity. In more than two centuries it has not been discredited. So far, we have had only one "adventurer" of the Old World type—Aaron Burr—and only one President who was prepared to betray the Constitution for partisan purposes—Richard M. Nixon. That is a somewhat better record than any other great nation can show. But who, now, appeals to "virtue"—who even expects it at a time when government itself sets an example of extravagance and military adventures?

For an elaborated account of what morality and virtue meant for at least some in the days of the Founding Fathers, we turn to Emerson, who lived halfway between their time and ours. In his essay on Character he said:

> Morals implies freedom and will. The will constitutes the man. He has his life in Nature, like a beast: but choice is born in him. . . . He chooses,—as the rest of the creation does not. . . . It were an unspeakable calamity, if any one should think he had the right to impose a private will on others. That is the part of a striker, an assassin. All violence, all that is dreary and repels, is not power but the absence of power.
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> Morals is the direction of the will on universal ends. He is immoral who is acting to any private end. He is moral,—we say it with Marcus Aurelius and with Kant,—whose aim or motive may become a universal rule, binding on all intelligent beings. . . .
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> All the virtues are special directions of this motive: justice is the application of this good of the whole to the affairs of each one: courage is contempt of danger in the determination to see this good of the whole enacted: love is delight in the preference of that benefit redounding to another over the securing of our own share: humility is a sentiment of our insignificance, when the benefit of the universe is considered.

For Emerson these lofty standards—which today seem almost wholly forgotten—led to a profound philosophical inference concerning knowledge and truth:

> If from these external statements we seek to come a little nearer to the fact, our first experiences in moral as in intellectual nature force us to discriminate a universal mind, identical in all men. Certain biases, talents, executive skills, are special to each individual, but the high, contemplative, all-commanding vision, the sense of Right and Wrong, is alike in all. Its attributes are self-existence, eternity, intuition, and command. It is the mind of the mind. We belong to it, not it to us. It is in all men, and constitutes them men. In bad men it is dormant, as

> health is in men entranced or drunken; but, however inoperative, it exists underneath whatever vices and errors. The extreme simplicity of this intuition embarrasses every attempt at analysis. We can only mark, one by one, the perfections which it combines in every act. It admits of no appeal, looks to no superior essence. It is the reason of things. . . .
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> He that speaks the truth executes no private function of an individual will, but the world utters a sound by his lips. . . . Such souls do not come in troops: oftenest appear solitary, like a general without a command, because those who can understand and uphold such appear rarely, not many, perhaps not one in a generation. And the memory and tradition of such a leader is preserved in some strange way by those who only half understand him, until a true disciple comes, who apprehends and interprets every word.

Surely Emerson himself was such a disciple, and Henry Steele Commager similarly serves in our time. He calls to mind the words and ideas that have lost all currency. He says:

> Virtue was essential to sustain and prosper the commonwealth—a term that everyone in the 18th Century understood and respected, and which has all but disappeared from our vocabulary. Commonwealth was the English equivalent of the *res publica*—the common thing, and it meant just what it said, that the wealth of society was indeed common property and common responsibility. Four of our early states were formally "commonwealths"—Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Kentucky; all the others are so by implication. . . .

For the meaning of the phrase "general welfare," which appears twice in our Constitution, Prof. Commager remembers the work of John Adams, a very different sort of "conservative" from those we have today:

> The responsibility of the commonwealth to the general welfare is nowhere more felicitously stated than in John Adams' constitution of Massachusetts: "Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, being necessary for the preservation of [the people's rights], it shall be the duty of legislators to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, to encourage schools, private societies and public institutions, arts, sciences, commerce, trades, manufactures and a natural history of the country; to inculcate the principles of general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality, sincerity, good humor, and all social affections and generous sentiments among the people."

Prof. Commager concludes:

> Imagine any constitution-makers writing that today!
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> If it is unfair to appeal from the exalted vocabulary—and the exalted philosophy—of the Founding Fathers to the current vulgarities and malpractices of our society, we may yet be allowed to hope that future policies and practices, "when touched by the better angels of our nature," may once again restore our earlier vocabulary to dignity and honor.