MY FIRST 25 YEARS

INSTEAD OF A FOOTNOTE

An Autobiography

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS
MY FIRST 25 YEARS

INSTEAD OF A FOOTNOTE

An Autobiography

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS
MY FIRST 25 YEARS

I.

At the close of the 20th century, some flea-bitten, sun-bleached, fly-specked, rat-gnawed, dandruff-sprinkled professor of literature is going to write a 5-volume history of the books of our century. In it a chapter will be devoted to publishers and editors of books, and in that chapter perhaps a footnote will be given to me. It might say I was born in Philadelphia on the morning of July 30th, 1889, that I wrote heterodox journalesque voluminously and unimportantly, that I was a competent editor, shrewd salesman, daring advertiser, and able publisher, that I edited thousands of books, that I sold hundreds of millions of copies, and usefully served a portion of my generation with fairness, sincerity, and intelligence. It may even go so far as to say that my efforts had some influence in the direction of clear thinking and honest scholarship. It may mention my forthright attacks on all forms of Supernaturalism, Mysticism, Fundamentalism, and respectable and dignified bunk in general. In the same chapter, a fat paragraph will be given to my ancient and admired friend, Joseph McCabe, in which it will be told how he wrote more cultural books than any other man since the invention of printing, and that 75 percent of his output was done, during about three decades, for Haldeman-Julius. So I'll be mentioned in two footnotes. Generous enough, I say. But I want to write a book about myself, because I think I've started something that shouldn't stop when I go to join the angels.

For me to blow up a thin footnote to a hefty book would be an act of crude egotism, unless I were able to show that my doing such a thing is motivated by a wish to make a set of points that could happily and constructively guide some editor of tomorrow along tested, proven lines, and help him begin, with little waste of time and energy, where I leave off. As I'll soon be 60, it's plain that my productive and creative years are numbered, and that before many more years I'll be living on borrowed time. Frankly, I feel I still have it in me to do a great deal of work—perhaps several times more than I've achieved in the past 30 years—and that the lessons I've learned can be applied and made fruitful by a new journeyman in the fields of mass-education, self-help, good literature, mind-liberating ideas, and modest, honest efforts to give the quest for truth a forward push.

The record, as I review it, proves me to be a person of modest literary and intellectual powers. Nature hasn't been too generous with me in matters of talent, and, of course, physique and looks. What's outstanding about me is the extraordinary, complete and effective use I've made of ordinary talents. Where others soar, I must push myself. Where others sing, I stammer. I've been called brilliant many times, especially in print, but I always smile to myself when I hear such nonsense. I'm not a diamond—not even a diamond-in-the-rough. I'm a brilliantly self-polished pebble. As editor and publisher I've always known my public intimately—it's myself. I judge a manuscript by only one standard—do I like it? If I find it interesting and readable, I print it. I'm Mr. Public—E. H.-J. multiplied hundreds of thousands of times. My selections are just the reflection of a single person's likes, dislikes, tastes—his ideas, notions, prejudices, ideals, aspirations, hopes. I'm not being modest—just being honest with my-
self. I'm not a genius—just a hard worker.

Somewhere in this land there's a 17-year-old boy or girl who'll read this record of the work and achievements of a so-so fellow, get the point of it all, find the opportunity and means, see the job as interesting and worth doing. That 17-year-old lad will perhaps do in a few years what took me 30 years to accomplish, and then build a mighty edifice, a monument to mass-education, civilized entertainment, culture, thought and beauty. It's my job to give him some hints. That's why I'm writing this book. That's why this book is more than the history of a man. It's the autobiography of an idea. As I've written many times before, I'm just a small-town printer who happens to believe that ideas are important.

Somewhere I'm going to light a spark. When I go, perhaps my modest organization will scatter, my inventory of millions of books will be sold as remainders or as waste paper. But the idea I've nursed so long won't disappear. That's my faith. I grant you I have no factual basis for this act of faith by a realist, a Rationalist, and a Freethinker. That 17-year-old boy will take up the job—I almost said torch—and do in a big way what I've done so slowly and painfully. This book is aimed at him. He'll catch the history of my idea. He'll grasp the hints I throw out. He'll know where I'm pointing. He'll see the whole scheme as a single process. He'll give me the only immortality I can accept as being reasonable. He'll give a great measure of immortality to an idea that got from me a limited life-span. And after him, another? That's the only "immortality" that makes sense.

First that 17-year-old boy will catch the idea; then he'll catch hell. He must be ready for that. It's part of the idea. The idea will find many friends, but it'll make many enemies—powerful ones in the government, the church—all the powers that live by reaction, exploitation, and obscurantism. They'll libel, slander, gag, suppress, lie, misrepresent. That's because they're afraid of the idea. The triumph of the idea means the end of cultural, intellectual, economic and political subservience and inferiority. There are men (rich and powerful) who shudder at the thought of a free world—free thinking, free living, sane behavior, mass health and happiness, individual freedom and social responsibility, the right to candid speech on any possible subject. They live on lies. I don't merely disapprove of them. I more than dislike them. I hate them with an implacable hatred. Enemies at the other extreme will be numerous and anonymous—the legions of the ignorant, the millions of dupes of the powerful few who control the rotten press, the contemptible radio, the insipid movies, the stinking church, the merciless czars of the industries, the mind-crippling schools, and all the other filthy forces of body-breaking reaction.

I said the idea would win friends. They'll be drawn from all classes and environments—groping students, truth-loving but hampered teachers, toil-worn workers in mines and factories, self-taught farmers, clear-brained old people, plodding letter-carriers, smart shop girls, wise waiters, atheistic doctors, skeptical lawyers, bed-fast patients, convicts, world-famous authors, great thinkers, free-spirited artists. Even an occasional priest will step out of the shadows of his living tomb, wave a friendly greeting, point to the vast edifice that is his intellectual prison, convey his frustration by a slow shrug, and return to the mausoleum that holds him chained to the lies that have always cursed, bled and twisted its emotionally pathetic and mentally cancerous victims.

My book will tell much about the idea, but also a little about the man. The man isn't important, though he may be somewhat interesting. But his idea is both important and interesting. The writing of this book is another extra job I have taken on. During my daily eight hours at the plant, I do my usual chores—editing manuscripts, corresponding with my authors, thinking up editorial ideas, writing short articles and paragraphs for my monthly paper, reading newspapers, magazines and books, planning advertising, preparing circulars, reading a little proof, ordering 20 tons of coal, pay-
ing a freight bill, checking the day's orders to see what the customers are asking for, conferring with a salesman on delivery dates for the next few cars of paper, sending for 550,000 lc pre-canceled stamps for my next mailing of catalogues of the Little Blue Books and larger books to the customers on the mailing list, selling 150 bales of waste to a maker of paper boxes, and handling the other details that keep me going up to the sound of the 5 o'clock whistle.

About 25 years ago I built an office against the east wall of the plant, which I find comfortable, quiet and attractive. It's about 14 by 18 feet, with an open fireplace, a couch, a dozen paintings by my friends Birger Sandzen and Abraham Walkowitz, a shower which I rarely use because the one at home fits better into my routine), a washroom, and a one-car garage built right into the small office structure. I drive into the garage and step from the car into my office, the door of which was already unlocked by the young man who sets the place in order each morning.

I work at three desks—the main one is in front of me, to the left is my typewriter table, and to the right is a smaller desk for papers, magazines, books, and whatnot, and drawers for manuscripts that are ready for the two linotypes. I sit in what's called a "posture chair," which whirls from desk to desk, and from desk to typewriter, as the mood hits me. At the typewriter I do my own correspondence and editorial work, for I never dictate. I tried dictating letters and pieces about 25 years ago and found myself getting too gabby. I'd dictate a full page letter, but when I typed it myself it would tell its story in two or three sentences. As for my articles, I can write them faster than I can dictate them, often doing a column article in 20 minutes.

To the right of my main desk is a metal cabinet which holds paper, letterheads, envelopes (already stamped), checks, carbons (which I rarely use), rejection cards, deposit slips, and a printed index of all my publications. Before me is a small calendar, piles of Little and Big Blue Book catalogues (for I always insert catalogues with my personal and business letters), a glass vase that holds about 50 sharpened pencils, a 2-pen desk set (not fountain pens), a heap of clips, plenty of stamps, much-used postal scales, scissors, knife, paste, type gauge a stenographer's book (in which I enter all check transactions for later recording in the usual office book), and two well-placed lights.

The bottom left-hand drawer of the main desk I call my Hell Box. In it I throw all unprintable obscenities that come from readers—off-color jokes, wicked gags, lascivious novelties, erotic poems, and anything else that's amusing but unmailable. That long, deep drawer is almost jammed. What'll happen to the contents, I don't know. Maybe I'll leave them to a seminary library. It's an odd collection, and downright unfortunate that the Good People won't allow it to be circulated legally. There's a lot of cleverness going to waste. Perhaps other times, other mores. Were they here, my Hell Box would appeal to Mark Twain, Jonathan Swift, Voltaire, Clarence Darrow, Rabelais, Balzac, Frank Harris, Laurence Sterne, Eugene V. Debs, Isaac Goldberg, and other lost and damned souls.

II.

Before leaving the office for home, let me make a little tour of the publishing plant. There are three buildings—a two-story and basement main building (100 x 250 feet), a long warehouse (75 x 300 feet) hard by the south end of the main plant, for storing carloads of book paper and newsprint, and across the street, a former garage (75 x 250 feet) turned into a warehouse for finished books.

Just off my office is the usual room for opening mail, keeping certain records, receiving callers, checking sources of orders (through a system of key numbers slipped into advertisements, circulars and catalogues), and numerous other small services.

Usually there are about a dozen girls up-stairs stuffing envelopes with circulars, and related matter, intended to keep the 550,000 names on the mailing list informed on
what's going on: lists of new titles, catalogues of old ones, special promotions, and so on. I like to hit the list about six times a year, and never less than four. The names are on metal plates that print direct on the envelopes. Five girls are kept at the job of putting new names on the list and taking out "nixies." In the same room are the girls who handle the orders, type labels, and in other ways get the demands of the customers arranged in such a way that the order-filling department down-stairs will be able to fill them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

With the best of care, we still make mistakes, but not many. The customers aren't so careful. Many people move and forget their new addresses, giving their old ones. Some forget to sign their names. Others forget to give their addresses. Some enclose unsigned checks. Others send the receipt-slip for their postal money order and keep the order themselves. Some even keep all the green slip and send us the application blank for the money order. Some customers, in foreign countries, especially in Canada, send their own postage stamps, thinking they might be of use in the U.S.A. Customers are careless in more ways than I can list. It keeps a girl busy, taking care of complaints. She's patient and polite even when customers threaten violence, warn they are ready to call the FBI, or demand that the local Chamber of Commerce, or mayor, or police get after these Haldeman-Julius guys, for many think I'm two persons.

The orders are handled quickly downstairs, where girls gather the various titles paid for by the public, check them to make sure the right ones are going out, wrap them, put in a set of stuffing (catalogues and circulars to promote future business), weigh and stamp them, and drop them into mail sacks for delivery to the postoffice by truck at 10 A.M., 2 P.M. and 4 P.M. We usually give same-day service, which bespeaks efficiency. Even orders received in the early afternoon go out before 5.

Then there are the mechanical departments. First comes the two linotypes, which set the books. I used to have all books made into plates, but with shortages that caused delays and extra costs, it was decided to use linotype slugs, storing the metal for Little Blue Books, but throwing in the metal for the bigger ones, after printing editions of perhaps 10,000. The two machines turn out a lot of books, and the men who run them know their business. They are intelligent, alert, talented journeymen, who get a lot of type set but at the same time give the fullest attention to matters of accuracy, style, and the like. A floorman pulls proofs, which are read by an assistant who reads the proof with the utmost care. The books are surprisingly clean, but errors persist. We can only do our best. The floorman, when he gets his final O.K.'s, pages the type and locks them in forms that hold 32 pages. Thus, a 96-page book must go to press three times. This part, called imposition, is highly delicate, intricate, complicated, and madly precise. Imposition must be as right as the multiplication table. When Little Blue Books go to press, we lock up 128 pages at a time, which means each impression finishes two 64-page booklets.

There are four cylinder presses for booklet work. Then there are the Kluge jobbers that turn out a great variety of work—circulars, stationery, labels, forms, and above all, covers for the big and little volumes. One man runs the three Kliges, and two men run the four cylinders, all of them automatic, of course, being supplied with mechanical feeders, so that the pressmen have little to do but see that the machines are in good running order.

The printed sheets are taken to the bindery, where four folding machines get them ready for the gang stitcher. Another folder does the covers. When covers and signatures are stitched, the books are then trimmed. And that's about all there is to it. This sounds like a lot of help, but the shop is surprisingly compact. About 50 employees can keep things running well. Seventy-five are needed in busy months, while a period of sensational business might make it necessary to employ as many as 110 or even 125 people. Even at its busiest, it's still
a little shop, compared with the giants in the printing industry. What makes this plant so different is the idea behind it.

_The New Yorker_ magazine said my project is “peculiar.” John Gunther, in his “Inside U.S.A.,” said my publishing concern is “unique.” Both are right. There’s no publisher in the world who’s doing exactly the job I’m working at, because no other person has the same idea that sparks me. The mechanical elements in this business are just ordinary, good machines. They didn’t cost a great deal of money. What makes the situation “peculiar” and “unique” is the uses to which I put that machinery—uses that delight many, bringing me expressions of thanks and admiration, and uses that enrage the Good People who stand in horror at the sight of a list that discusses religion, sex, clericalism, Catholicism, and related subjects with the same passion for accuracy and truth displayed in a booklet on how to teach yourself to swim or how to cane a chair.

Some of these Good People have the notion that any literature about sex must be obscene. It happens that the Supreme Court has held that all have the right to discuss all matters of public interest. But these Good People don’t know this. They forward my catalogues to the postoffice department, with strong letters demanding that I be put in the hoosegow immediately, where I belong. They also write me telling me that my books on religion and sex can mean only one thing—an endless bout with sulphur and brimstone. Now and then, for the benefit of these Good People, and for those of my friends who wonder how I “get away with it,” I call attention to the case of Mary Ware Dennett, author of a booklet, “The Sex Side of Life,” who had been tried in the middle 20’s on a charge of having violated the law prohibiting the sending of obscene matter through the mails. Here the Supreme Court said, in part: “The defendant’s discussion of the phenomena of sex is written with sincerity of feeling and with an idealization of the marriage relation and sex emotion. We think it tends to rationalize and dignify such emotions... We hold that an accurate ex-

position of the relevant facts of the sex side of life in decent language and in manifestly serious and disinterested spirit cannot ordinarily be regarded as obscene.”

Lots of people don’t know that, so they call for my head. If they don’t insult me directly, or if they don’t sic the cops on my tail, they write to the magazines and newspapers that accept my advertisements, and business managers of standard publications scare easily. I can always buy more space than I can find the money to pay for, but there are some who reject my business with pious and lordly disdain.

_The New York Times_, after printing my page advertisements for about 20 years, during which I spent more than $100,000, suddenly kicked me out, because the Catholic hierarchy (which is powerful in New York City) demanded I be ousted for the sake of purity and piety. _The New York Herald Tribune_ and the Hearst and Patterson papers, followed the same track, after all of them, like the _Times_, had, for years, printed my advertisements. _PM_ takes anything I offer. At least up to now.

In Chicago, I can appear in Marshall Field’s _Sun_ whenever I get the notion, and in the Chicago _Times_ (before Mr. Field took it over) my pages were run, but not under my name. The ads were signed by the Little Blue Book Company, and the address agreed upon as acceptable was one in St. Louis instead of Girard. By such amusing maneuvers was I made presentable.

In Detroit, the _Free Press_ ran a full-page ad which contained some titles objected to by the hierarchy. There was a storm of protest. The paper then ran a box on the front page, apologizing for its “mistake,” a boner it had pulled at least 20 times in previous years. I refused to pay for the space, which was worth about $1,400. I stood pat. The _Free Press_ never collected, and a year later, without a word of explanation or apology, it began running my ads again.

In Philadelphia, the _Inquirer_ ran a three-page advertisement which offered my complete list of Little Blue Books. It was a hot looking ad, and dominated the issue. Then
the hierarchy got busy. Letters poured in. Whole classes in parochial schools wrote postal cards to the publisher. The whole campaign had been organized by a few leaders. The day after the advertisement appeared, the Inquirer ran a box apologizing for having accepted my business. I refused to pay the Inquirer's $4,500 bill. And I wasn't even pressed for payment.

A smaller daily in Fort Wayne, Ind., also ran my advertisement during this period of publishers' apologies, got hell from Bishop Noll, who's head of the national campaign of the Legion of Decency (the force that's been hounding me for years), and ran an editorial warning the readers not to buy the books I'd advertised in the apologist's own paper. A pretty situation. The advertisement cost about $350, which I refused to pay. Here the publisher got huffy and sued for what he thought was coming to him. The suit was filed in St. Louis, where the advertising order had been issued. The argument was offered that as we were then fighting a war for freedom—including freedom of the press—it was patriotic and an exhibition of pure Americanism for the paper to roast hell out of me.

My point was that the publisher had a right to tell his readers my books are no good and not to bother to read them. But I made the further point that when a newspaper sells its space to advertise something, it can't expect to collect when it counter-advertises in its editorial columns that the stuff offered in the commercial advertisement should not be bought. You can't have it both ways. If the books are no good, reject the advertisement. But don't take the ad and then kill its effectiveness by telling your readers to lay off. My point was accepted by the judge, who decided the bill shouldn't be paid. The publisher appealed, but decided, after sober second thought, to accept the court's decision. All this gave me many a big laugh. Every publisher who had played up to the Good People had been compelled to pay for his fun. In all I enjoyed more than $6,500 worth of free advertising.

In the magazine field, I get a page into Collier's, there's a rumpus from the Good People, and my second page is rejected with the air of a virgin propositioned by a tawny wolf. Then, six months later, the same page is offered and accepted, and then the one after that is rejected again—and so on. Off again, on again—all because the Good People don't like me. It seems Collier's likes $7,300 cash money, but doesn't like the squawks of the Good People, so it takes an order for a page, grabs the money, takes the squawks, kicks me out, and later starts the rumpus all over again. It's a little confusing, so one must watch the calendar to find out whether it's H-J who has the inside track or the Good People. Henry Luce, since his wife turned Catholic and he turned pious, has looked on me with horror, so Haldeman-Julius never rubs against Luce's naked ladies in Life, or any other of his publications. Liberty never has any qualms. Haldeman-Julius' money is always good. Maybe the Good People don't read Liberty. Or maybe the publisher of Liberty doesn't care what the hierarchy thinks so long as its kicks aren't supported with dollars, while Haldeman-Julius' orders are backed with $3,000 checks.

This matter of advertising is of first importance in my scheme of operations. My announcements in newspapers and magazines bring me a steady stream of new names, the heart of the business side of distributing my publications. Without fresh names day after day, the list would soon turn sour. In a few years it would be dead. Paid space is the solution, especially if it pays its way. My theory of advertising is simple and workable. If I spend $1,000 for a bit of space, and if I get $2,000 back in orders, I'm satisfied. That makes the advertising for new customers cost 50 percent of the gross. In short, if I sell a person $1 worth of books, 50c must be put out in advance to pay for getting his attention. Sometimes I get more than two to one. I've even taken in 10 to one, but such purchases of space are rare. Two to one is acceptable. But frequently I don't get even that. Often it's one-and-a-half to one, or one for one, or even less than the cost of the space. It
hurts to pay out $1,000 for space and get back, let us say, $500 in orders. But the tale goes with the hide.

Once the name gets on my mailing list the customer is put through the wringer. He is hit often and hard, so that frequently where a new customer comes in with $1, he ends up by buying regularly, and as there are more than 2,500 titles to select from, there’s room for commercial activities over many months or years. Now and then a well-heeled customer comes in with a check for the entire list. And that means real money, for it costs $127 to buy the entire list of larger books at one time, and $179.50 to get all Little Blue Books. Orders for anywhere from $5 to $50 are frequent. One customer lives in the Arctic Circle, where he is employed as an agent for a fur company and gets mail only once a year. Each year, for years now, he’s been sending $50 at a crack for a 12-months’ supply of my literature. So it’s obvious the business isn’t one of nickels and dimes. The average sale is $1.50. Men’s names dominate my list, by 75 percent. I’ve tried to get the customers’ list on the basis of half men and half women, but so far without success, so I take it more women than men are unready for my idea of what makes good reading. A great many orders are paid for with cash, $5, $10 and $20 bills being by no means unusual, and $1 bills being numerous. Many send checks, and most of them are good, not more than one or two bouncing each week, and perhaps 80 percent of these finally are collected. Most bad checks are only mistakes that are quickly corrected.

Customers who are friendly to my policies go to surprising lengths to help things along. At least a dozen come in each day with lists of anywhere from three to 10 names of friends who should receive catalogues. Books are rarely returned, except when mistakes are made in shipping titles—mistakes which are often the customer’s fault, though, as I’ve said, we also make our mistakes. Crookedness is rare. I remember one fellow, however, who would receive 20 books, read them, return them, claim they weren’t the ones he wanted, and get 20 other titles. Then later, the second batch of 20 would come back, and he’d reach for a third helping. He did that 13 times before we caught up with him. Now and then someone will send in an order for $1 worth of books and ask that a charge account be opened, that he’ll pay the $1 after 30 days. When he’s told our business is on a cash-with-order basis, he complains he’s an honest upright citizen who always honors his obligations, accuses me of being mercenary and unfriendly, says he buys everything through charge accounts, and my books should be no exception. Again the answer is, No. It doesn’t make sense to turn small (or even larger) purchases into problems of bookkeeping, credit, and the like. Besides, I think that any fellow who would go to so much trouble to buy $1 worth of books on credit is crook-ed to begin with. He’s trying to play wise and outwit a seller by getting his goods for nothing while other dumbbells actually send money. It’s better to have fewer customers than deal with people who are hard to do business with. So everything is cash on the barrel-head, the same way that Uncle Sam does when he sells a stamp for 1¢ or a bundle of them for $10,000.

One day I had passed up to me a beautiful letterhead from the Maharajah of some province (it sounded like Prividore) in India. I never saw so much gold on a piece of paper before. It looked like money. By some strange quirk, I O.K.’d the letter of the secretary who was writing for the Maharajah, who wanted quite a batch of books—something like $25 worth. The books went out, prepaid. The bill never was paid. Haile Selassie, on the other hand, ordered a batch of books from his Addis Ababa palace in Ethiopia, and a draft on a New York bank was attached to the letter. Haile Selassie read practically the same kind of books that would appeal to an intelligent taxi-driver. And here and there were titles on Sexology. Even kings like that sort of thing.

Others like poetry. A high-school teacher of literature once wrote: ‘Now that you’ve brought out ‘The Rubaiyat’ why don’t you publish ‘Omar Khayyam’?” Another teach-
er, who had charge of the class in drama, order 40 copies of "Isben's Goats." A reader, perhaps self-taught, said he wanted a play by an ancient Greek who's name sounds like something asked by a Greek tailor, and he was sent his copy of "Medea," by Euripides. While still another—a harassed young fellow in the hills of Tennessee—wrote: "Please send me a book that will cover my immediate need. My girl tells me she must have treatment for her obstetrical condition, and as you keep up-to-date on medical subjects I thought maybe you have a title that goes into the cure for this disease." And there's the author who suggested, surely with tongue-in-cheek: "Since books about Lincoln are always best sellers, and so are books about doctors and dogs, I offer to write a sure-fire book entitled: 'Lincoln's Doctor's Dog.'" And from the same author: "I came on my son while he was writing dirty words on the back fence behind the out-house. I warned him against such waste of talent and advised him to save them for a novel." A cautious drama coach, in a small city, wrote that she planned to direct Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," and wanted to know how to get in touch with the Shakespeare estate with a view to getting permission to do the play. An amateur philosopher wrote: "I would like to do a Ms. for you of an inspirational nature, the point of which will be to take men as they come—like a camphor cake in a men's toilet." And hardly a day passes without at least one letter from somebody who says he has checked off many titles of booklets he'd like to read, and how does he go about getting them. Thus does he give the impression that there are people in this country who are still to learn that the Babylonians invented money. There are no end of men who are dissatisfied with the length of their verge and are convinced I have a book that will tell them what to do about it. Some lovers of the best in poetry send for Oscar Wilde's "Reading in Jail."

I have received countless thousands of letters from friends of my idea, telling me how the little volumes influenced their lives, added to their pleasures, increased their knowledge, broadened their vision, offered entertainment, nicked morsels or mountains of bunk, reduced their passion for superstition and supernaturalism, introduced them to the best in literature, and in other ways helped them along the way to self-education. Here's a letter that's like many others, from a woman in Minneapolis: "Your Little Blue Books dotted the way for me through a childhood studded with literary stuffing. My father had a bachelor cousin who loved nothing better than carrying your Little Blue Books around with him, and as other small fry hunted for bonbons, I hunted for a Little Blue Book in those bulging pockets of our relative. By the time he got through his active years, there was scarcely space enough in his room for him because your Little Blue Books were crowding him out." Or take this one from a South Carolina reader: "You have not been receiving Little Blue Book orders from me because I have been in jail the past six months, having been convicted of operating an illegal still. During the trial the still was brought into court. The judge, jury and spectators agreed that it was the finest piece of coppersmithing ever seen in this section. I owe it all to a Little Blue Book."

* * *

Frequently I'm asked how the idea got started and how it got going. This is a hard question, but I believe I'm close to the truth when I say I got it when I was about 15 years old, in Philadelphia, my home town. I dropped into a small bookstore at 5th and Pine streets, run by Nicholas L. Brown. There, on a table near the door, I picked up a pamphlet edition of Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Jail." I then went across the street into a small, bare park that covered a block. It was winter, and I was cold, but I sat down on a bench and read that booklet straight through, without a halt, and never did I so much as notice that my hands were blue, that my wet nose was numb, and that my ears felt as hard as glass. Never until then, or since, did any piece of printed matter move me so deeply. When I walked
away, my heels hit the stones with sharp clicks. I'd been lifted out of this world—and by a 10c booklet. I thought, at the moment, how wonderful it would be if thousands of such booklets could be made available. Years later, while a newspaper reporter, I visited scores of bookstores and always poked around for pamphlets. My meager wage didn't permit me to buy many expensive clothbound books. And always I'd say to myself how nice it would be if such pamphlets could be picked up easily and inexpen-

During those years there was one thing about the Socialist movement that always appealed to me—its steady production of low-priced pamphlets. Of course, all were on politics or economics, but they were usually well done and worth reading. I suppose I've read every pamphlet the Socialist Party and related groups ever issued. I still have at least a half hundred in my library.

In October, 1915, I was invited to join the editorial staff of the old Appeal to Reason, the famous Socialist weekly, at Girard, Kansas, at $25 per week, I accepted. On June 1, 1916, I married Anna Marce Haldeman, a former actress, writer, and officer in a small-town bank, The State Bank of Girard. This new responsibility earned me a $5 raise. I held down the job for a few months and then quit to live on a farm near Cedarville, Ill., which had been left to my wife by her mother. While we were there, awaiting the arrival of our daughter, Alice, who was born on May 26, 1917, the Appeal to Reason, under the editorship of Louis Kopelin, threw over its anti-war stand and came out in support of the war. The name of the paper was changed to The New Appeal. The change of policy, the general war situation, and other circumstances, caused the paper's influence to wane quickly. Circulation started downward. Some months later, I rejoined the staff and spent some time in Washington, D. C., where I wrote weekly articles for the paper. When I returned to Girard I found that the paper was headed for the rocks, mainly because the owners were more interested in mining operations (which caused them losses) than in publishing.

One day in January, 1919, with $25,000 advanced to me by my wife, Louis Kopelin and I took over the Appeal to Reason plant, with a year's time to pay an additional $50,000. That morning, after the papers had been signed and I was now the main owner, I did a simple, direct thing. I reached into my desk and brought out two pamphlets—the Oscar Wilde ballad (the same edition I had picked up years before in Philadelphia) and The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, another favorite. I marked them "16 ems, 8pt," and put them on the linotype. As the Appeal's copy was usually marked "13 ems, 8pt," there was an expression of surprise from the grumpy, accurate operator, Old Nick. I explained this work wasn't for the paper; it was to be the beginning of a pamphlet series. Those two pamphlets are still Nos. 1 and 2 in the series. They'll be there as long as I have anything to say about the project.

At that time, the booklets (even then they were $1.50 x 5 inches in size) sold at 25c, publicity for them being given in the advertising columns of the Appeal. I had confidence in the idea. It had long been with me. And here I was in a position to give it a whirl. I soon prepared a large circular—really a broadside—which I planned to send to the 175,000 names on the mailing list of the Appeal. I made the circular the same size as a page in the Appeal, and ran the advertisement there several times.

The idea was like this: Readers were asked to send $5, for which I would send 50 booklets as they came off the press. I didn't even have a list of titles. All I could promise them was 50 booklets, to be mailed five at a time. Five thousand readers took me up, which meant I had $25,000 to work with. I hurried through the 50 titles (and they were good ones, too, for I haven't believed in trash at any time in my life) and got many letters expressing satisfaction with the venture. Encouraged, I announced a second batch of 50 titles, and called for $5 subscriptions. Again I got about 5,000 readers to
take me up. Meanwhile, the booklets were selling well to readers who hadn't subscribed for batches of 50. As a result of this early and consistent success, I was able to pay the original owners all that was coming to them that first year, and later returned my wife's $25,000 in the form of a farm and large house—the home I'm still living in, near Girard.

It wasn't long before I had 210 titles in what was then known as the Appeal Pocket Series. I then decided to change the name of the library to the Little Blue Books, and that's been its name ever since. With 210 titles in the series, and the list growing from week to week, I decided to try my luck with some outside advertising. Thus far I had given birth to the idea and carried it to unbroken success and financial stability because I had that most essential of tools—a mailing list large enough to exploit in a substantial way. But as there was a limit to what could be done with about 175,000 readers, I prepared a 420-ague line advertisement (three columns by 10 inches) and had an acquaintance in the advertising business place it for me in the Sunday edition of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, at a cost of about $150 (I'm not sure of the rate and don't think it's important enough to look up), and, at 10c per copy, the Little Blue Books went to town in a big way. I got more than $1,000 in orders. Quickly, the advertisements were run in a score of big-circulation newspapers, and before the month was out I'd spent the staggering (to me at the time) sum of $5,000, without a single flop. With money pouring in like that, I soon was able to buy all kinds of modern machinery, hire new authors, have the booklets set in an outside shop and turned into easily handled plates, have the building enlarged considerably, send out greater quantities of circulars, and in other ways put the enterprise into action on a quantity basis.

Before long, I was able to produce 240,000 books each 24 hours, were we to work three shifts, which we did only once, about 10 years later when I hit the country with a set of High School booklets at $2.98 and sold 300,000 sets in about 10 months.

Studying the history of the Little Blue Books during the last 29 years, I'd say there's a steady market for about 10,000,000 Little Blue Books per year. That's a lot of books, but it doesn't put me into big business. I'm still a small-town printer who happens to think that ideas count. Of course, in addition to the 1845 Little Blue Books I've been issuing larger booklets (5¼ x 8½ inches in size), and they promise to do as well as the little ones, if not better. In only a few years I've brought out 650 titles, and many more are in sight. I'll tell more about them later.

Some readers are curious about my education. They ask if I had to pick up my education on the wing, or did I have university advantages and want to share these with the man with a handful of nickels. There just wasn't any formal education to amount to anything. I never finished even grammar school, having quit at 13 to go to work at a great variety of jobs—factory worker, office boy, usher in Keith's Chestnut Street theater, copyholder in the proofrooms of two Philadelphia dailies, and numerous other joblets that paid little and did me little harm.

All I got out of my years in the Philadelphia public schools was a smattering of U.S. history, a bit of geography, some grammar, arithmetic, and a few other basic subjects. I was a fair student, well-behaved, polite, and a little scared of everybody. The most interesting moment in my life as a pupil was the day I returned to the school at Third and Oxford, at about 1 o'clock, and saw the building on fire. The other most interesting moment was when I stood waiting for a freight to pull by so I could get to school and saw a man jump under a car and put his head under a wheel—a lovelorn little baker who had been turned down by the girl who served coffee and cakes in the place where he was employed. When teacher asked me why I was late, I explained that I had been detained by the sight of a fellow committing suicide. She said I was an ornery cuss and shouldn't look at such sights, or at least not talk about them. But I noticed she asked for details.
I don't think I was harmed by anything I learned in my school years. True, I had to listen to Bible passages each morning, but we kids got so we didn't even listen, and so I wasn't turned into a pious fanatic. In fact, I don't recall having learned a single thing from all that class reading of the Word of God.

My home life was devoid of piety. Neither parent cared seriously about religion, and never thought I needed to absorb a mess of superstitious notions in order to earn a place in heaven. They were indifferent, for which I thank them. I'm not ready to say they were Freethinkers. They just didn't seem to care a damn.

The first mind-liberating book I read was Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason," when I was about 12 or 13, and this masterpiece is No. 5 on my list. Then I came on some dozen Ingersoll pamphlets, and they settled religion once and for all, though I remember, after finishing the last lecture, I went walking, and while telling myself I didn't believe in God or any other idea of religion, I would challenge God—assuming there was one—to do his stuff before I cast the die. He could strike me dead before I reached the next corner—and I kept on walking. When I got half a block beyond the corner I decided that if there was a God he didn't give a damn about what I thought or did.

Then began reading in earnest, for up until that time I had been one of the neighborhood's most fanatical readers of "Old King Brady," the Frank Merriwell series, and other nickel stories, a few of the Henty books, and all of Horatio Alger. But now, after Paine and Ingersoll, I craved meat. By the time I was 15, I was reading Karl Marx, Frederich Engels, Jean Jaures, Karl Kautsky, Eugene V. Debs, Morris Hillquit, Franklin H. Wentworth, George R. Kirkpatrick, A. M. Simons, Arthur Morrow Lewis, Ernest Haeckel, Joseph McCabe, Mark Twain, Emerson, Poe, Longfellow, Balzac, Guy de Maupassant Shakespeare, Upton Sinclair, Dickens, Andreyev, Gorki, Tolstoy, Zola, Max Nordau, Jack London, H. G. Wells, Ambrose Bierce, Voltaire, Carlyle, Dumas, Spencer, Hugo, Huxley, and scores of others. I soaked it up, I talked about it, I asked others about it, I listened to the conversations of those I thought my superiors in information and mental ability.

At that time I often visited the headquarters of the Philadelphia local of the Socialist Party, at 1305 Arch street, in a dusty, dismal, deserted set of rooms that was always filled with talking men, and a few women. I've never heard better talk before or since, and whenever I heard about some book that had been the basis of an argument I'd rush to the public library and try to get it, and if it wasn't there I'd manage to buy one in a second-hand store, especially Leary's, opposite the old postoffice at 9th and Chestnut, or rather half way up the block near Market street. Often I'd have some friendly person lend me the book, or, if it was in the book department of the part of the headquarters where literature was sold, I'd read it then and there. Scores of pamphlets were always on hand, and I read them all. I was a full-fledged left-winger at 16.

By the time I was 17 I was writing articles, essays, editorials, and stories, many of which were printed in the Socialist press. My name then was Emanuel Julius. It was after I married Miss Haldeman that I pinned her name to my own and turned it to Haldeman-Julius. The name of Emanuel Julius began to get around. Before long I was on the editorial staff of the New York Call, at $15 per week. I wrote like a demon—labor and Socialist news, Sunday articles on Bernard Shaw, art, literature, impressions of common life, sketches about everyday people—little stories that had the common touch. In time they were brought out in a book, "The Color of Life." Later I went to work on Victor L. Berger's Milwaukee newspaper, The Leader. I was put on the staff a week before the first edition rolled off the press. I covered the city hall, the jail, the sheriff's office, the morgue, police headquarters, the district court, and the fire department. I used to write from five to seven columns of stuff a day—all for $18 per week, for which I held down three men's jobs. I started at 7:30 in the morning, worked in and out of the office until about 5 o'clock, and almost every
day my city editor would give me a night assignment—lectures, concerts, mass meetings, and anything he could think of, because he—Chester M. Wright—believed in the gospel of toil. I didn’t mind. I couldn’t imagine doing anything more interesting than to cover the things I was told to report.

A lot of my stuff was signed with my own name, or my pen-name—Patsy O’Bang. My own name went on serious, dignified pieces; the O’Bang name went on humorous things, for I was given to turning on the whimsy-whamsy.

One day I was sent out to get the story and especially the picture of a woman who had been killed by her frustrated lover. It was a typical passion murder and suicide, and I was the staff’s expert on passion. I brought in the victim’s picture with my story and Chester frowned at the photograph. It was his theory that only a pretty woman’s picture should be used, and here was a woman of at least 220 pounds. Chester didn’t see any point in wasting space on a homely woman. So he told me to go back and get a picture of the dead woman when she was younger and prettier. It wouldn’t make much difference if the picture were 10 years old, so long as she was pretty.

I called at the house and found the family in mourning. The dead woman was in an uncovered coffin in the front room—the parlor. The shades were down. Things looked goopy. But I could see a framed picture right over the stiff. It was her picture. She was young. And she was attractive. I didn’t stop to ask permission. Time was of the essence. So I barged in and put my right foot on one of the horses holding the coffin. My left foot waved in midair. My right hand reached for the frame, but in trying to work it loose from the hook that was holding the wire, I took a tumble, the horse buckled under, the coffin rolled over, and the corpse, picture, coffin, horses and I worked ourselves into a mixed-up pile that might have looked funny to outsiders, but it horrified the family. Holding on to my picture, I dashed for the door, crying that there was nothing to worry about, that I would get the undertaker back in a jiffy, and if there was any damage done to charge it to the Milwaukee Leader, and I was off with the coveted picture. It was such stunts as this that made me strong with my city editor. It was always my theory that the best way to hold a good job was to work harder than anyone else, even if it meant getting tangled with a 220-pound corpse. My ribs hurt for weeks.

V.

Carl Sandburg, then perhaps in his early 30’s and still to become famous, had his desk next to mine on the third floor of Brisbane Hall, the home of the Leader. At home, Sandburg wrote poetry, but in the office he held down the prosaic job of reporting the activities of the unions. He turned out dull pieces that no one read except the labor leaders he mentioned. I soon spotted Carl as a plodder—the pokiest man in the place. It would take him a half minute to decide how to say “Good morning.” Everybody knew he was secretly addicted to poetry, though none of us had ever been shown a line. The dignity and quiet ways of Sandburg held our respect. The emerging poet wasn’t standoffish. No one could accuse him of undemocratic, snooty ways. He smoked long two-for-a-nickel Pittsburgh stogies, one of which he’d hold in his mouth for hours before making up his mind to light up. He drank beer moderately, but with relish. He never talked about himself or what he was doing, but he was always glad to listen to others talk about themselves, their activities, what they’d been reading, and their notions in general. Intellectually, he was an introvert; emotionally, a mixer. He liked people, especially members of the herd, and liked to quote their quaint, or earthy, or funny, or colorful expressions, jokes, badinage, and original profanity.

As labor reporter, it fell to Sandburg to get after the street car corporation, the pet target of the Socialist administration of Mayor Emil Seidel and the rest of the Socialist politicians, and, of course, the great leader himself, Congressman Victor L. Berger, the real boss of the Leader. The administration
had compelled the street car corporation to pay for the paving between its tracks, the theory being that that part of the streets were the responsibility of the company, while the people could be expected to pay for the rest of the street. This was a blow to the company, and the capitalistic newspapers, led by the Journal, yelled "confiscation" and "persecution" of innocent, self-sacrificing public service organizations. The company, the standard press and the moneyed interests of Milwaukee (except the immense breweries) fought away at everything the Socialist officials tried to put over, and criticized everything, whether good or indifferent.

When the street car company paved its part of a street (between the tracks, of course) it did an elaborate job, worked out years before by old-line politicians. The most important process was laying the "binder," a few inches of some preparation that was intended to "bind" the pavement to the ground and hold it down in place. When the Socialist street commissioner who was a bright, young engineer, took charge of his part of the street and put down new paving, he cut out the binder and just deposited the paving on the ground. There was an uproar in the press. More Socialist inefficiency. But the official stood pat. He announced, in a simple sentence, that when a pavement was laid down it just naturally remained there, and that no binder was needed to hold it down. The gravitational pull being a dependable force, the part of the streets paved by the Socialists remained on the ground with the same tenacity as that part between the tracks that had the binder. When things quieted down, the company abandoned its capitalistic binder and paved along approved socialistic lines.

It was about this time that someone decided that the Leader should do something for the downtrodden, exploited, hounded, spied-on motor-men and conductors, and Carl Sandburg, being the labor reporter, was called on to take over the job of arousing the class consciousness of the wage slaves and bring them out in a magnificent strike against industrial tyranny. For weeks, Sandburg prepared the way, bringing up every possible argument against the company's labor policies and every conceivable argument for a walk-out of the men. They were told how the other unions would support them morally and financially, and that the Leader would see that their side of the story reached a sympathetic public that could be depended on to walk throughout the proposed strike. It was finally agreed that on a certain morning—at exactly 11 o'clock—the men should strike. They were to leave their cars wherever they happened to be at that particular time and hurry to labor headquarters for a mass meeting, speeches, and the routine of organization—for, by some oversight, no one had taken the trouble thus far to organize the men into actual unions. It was felt that the power of the Leader ought to be enough.

Came the day, and Carl Sandburg was at his telephone in the Leader office waiting to hear from scores of volunteer watchers who were to telephone the facts about the beginning of the strike. A special edition surely would be needed. And that was up to Sandburg. But when 11 o'clock struck, and he looked out the window and saw the street cars on two streets running as usual, he bit into his stogie and just about ruined it. For minutes he stood there quietly muttering. Then Chester told him to do something, for God's sake, and not stand there and leave the Leader hanging by its eyebrows. So Carl grabbed his hat and started for the street, followed by a half dozen of us, who wanted to see the excitement and perhaps even help bring labor into the ranks of the militants. Carl rushed into the center of the intersection, waved his hat wildly, and yelled, "There's a strike on, you goddam fools, don't you know there's a strike on!" Of course, two lines of street cars stopped, and some of the motormen and conductors stepped into the street to see what was holding up traffic. They didn't seem to know anything about a strike. All looked alike—tall, red-faced, reddish-haired Irishmen. The company seemed to prefer young Irish immigrants.

A motor car loaded with company
officials pulled up and the president and the manager of the utility hurried over. They had expected something around Brisbane Hall, the focal point of the Sandburg saga, so it was only a minute or two before they were at the scene. Laughing, joshing, kidding, the company officials shoed Carl off the tracks and onto the sidewalk. “You’re holding up traffic, Mister,” they laughed. “There’s a strike!” yelled Sandburg. “There isn’t any strike,” replied the good-natured official, who seemed sure of himself and the power of the company over its employes. Sandburg saw his crusade collapse right before his eyes. The car bells clanged. They moved on, slowly at first, but after three or four had passed they went by full speed. Sandburg returned to the office, threw his hat on his typewriter and turned to Chester. “What’ll I do? What about that special edition?” He was told, quietly but firmly, that the less’said, the better; that this was one strike that never came off—not even for five minutes; that the only street cars stopped on their rounds were the ones that had waited for Sandburg to get out of the way. Under the ordinary rules of management, Carli should have been fired, but here was a case in which the Leader, the politicians, the mayor and Berger himself had all turned in their O.K.’s, so Carl was told to forget about his strike and tell the readers how the big brewery workers’ union was making out.

You can imagine what the Journal and the other capitalist newspapers said about Sandburg’s strike. The subject was a delicate one for years, and the Leader preferred to ignore it, giving instead its full attention to the Washington doings of Victor L. Berger and his magnificent speech on the problem of wool. When Berger dropped into Milwaukee for a few days, he went around with his pockets crammed with copies of his wool speech. Just what that speech was about, I don’t know, but it had something to do with the exploitation of the men who raise the nation’s wool. Whenever Berger met anyone, he’d pull out a copy of the pamphlet, say, with his attractive German accent, “Haf you read my vool speech?” and pass it over. That “vool speech” helped take the minds of the voters off the streetcar strike.

Oscar Ameringer, who was holding some kind of a top job in either the Socialist or trade union movement, was called on to help get Sandburg’s farcical strike out of mind, so he was sent on a tour of the town, where he turned on his famous humor. He would talk for 90 minutes, with jokes pouring out one a minute. He kept his audiences in stitches. He was advertised as the “Mark Twain of the Socialist movement,” but I think it would have been more accurate to dub him “the Bill Nye of the Socialist movement.” He wasn’t quite up to the sort of thing Twain could do, but at that he was a comical fellow who laughed thousands of workers into the ranks of Socialism and trade unionism. I heard some of his speeches, but I can’t recall a single one of his jokes. I’ve thought long and hard—feeling it would be a good idea at this point to insert a few Ameringer bellylaughs—but I can’t yank a single one out of the dead past. Perhaps it’s better this way.

It wasn’t long before Sandburg decided he and Milwaukee were through. He went to Chicago, where he and several other Leader employees (including Chester and myself) joined the World, the Socialist paper that had jumped to a huge circulation in no time because the big papers were on strike. When the World blew up, Sandburg went over to the News, where he was put on movie reviews. It was then that he blew the town’s top with his much-quoted, prize-winning poem about Chicago and became a famous poet in a matter of days. I read everything of his that I could find, and while I liked some of the little pieces—perhaps 50 lines in all—I couldn’t see what the shooting was all about. The Chicago poem didn’t burn me up, perhaps because I didn’t like Chicago and couldn’t see it as even the subject for a piece of Whitman-esque verse. From then on he acted like a poet, combed his white hair down over his eyebrows, and went around lecturing, reading, and singing folk songs about cowboys, railroadmen, and wheat fields. I caught one of his group of songs about
railroaders and thought them silly, didn't see any art in them, and considered Sandburg just about the worst concert artist ever turned loose on culture-hungry clubwomen. Since then he's become our national poet—or close to it—but to me he's still the same pokey, slow-witted, boresome person and third-rate literary artist of Leader days.

The Milwaukee Journal's star reporter, a fellow named Manly, was my pet rival. He had me at a disadvantage because he covered only the police run, while I did a half dozen additional spots. He was a tall, bald, fidgety, furtive, explosive, temperamental fellow who seemed to have only one aim in life—to beat me on exclusives. I disliked him from the first, mainly because he covered his bald head with about a dozen long hairs that he trained to waver from near his left ear to well over the center of the bald area. Besides, he carried his own camera, which was unfair competition. And finally, he got $30 a week, and was sure to let me know that fact whenever he met me.

My first maneuver was to gang up with the police reporter on the Wisconsin News, a little, fat, red-headed, lazy, clever fellow who liked to have his stories brought to him. We agreed to meet every morning at the same place and swap. I found that he wasn't a stickler for facts, which didn't worry me when he turned in little feature stories. The big ones, the kind that had to be right, I handled myself. But little white fakes weren't unethical, so I let him give me his fakes and I'd add a few of my own. They were little things, and my city editor knew about them and approved. I turned them in because they were readable, and because I knew the Journal's city editor would raise hell with Manly every time he came on one of our police yarns that poor, helpless Manly had to miss because they never happened. I figured he'd have to spend several hours each day running down my tiny touches of fiction, and that helped even the score and lessen the advantages he held over me because he was expected to cover only the police run. For example, one story told of how a mother, working in the kitchen of her third-story flat, saw her two-year-old girl fall out the window. She hit a clothesline and bounced into a huge pile of wash in a basket. Mother came running down, sure she'd find her little girl dead. Instead, the tot was on top of the rags, laughing, and begging, "Do it again, mama!" Mama rushed the kid to the city hospital, which was part of the police run. That angle brought it into Manly's domain, and sure enough his city editor asked how-come, and sent him out to check the story and get pictures. The News man and I were always careful to put addresses in the middle of an empty lot, or beyond the end of a street, so we had the poor bastard running all over town. Whenever he nailed one of our stories he'd come back winded and angry, and would cry: "I'm going to write a Sunday feature about the fakes of you two guys."

On one story, Manly and I fought it out for weeks, this time without any faking. A Greek candy-store owner used to take good-looking young virgins in charge, give them his candy as little presents, and lead them to his fancy apartment upstairs, where he had a magnificent bedroom covered with mirrors—all four walls and ceiling. That's where he did his dirty work. But once Chacone—that was his name—lured a girl who was eight weeks under the age of consent, which was 18. (My Chacone stories all were accurate, except for one sentence in an interview with the defendant, in which I had him complain that America was going to see the age of consent moved up year by year until it got stabilized at 30.) What had looked like a nice party had turned out to be jail-bait, even though the girl must have weighed 145 pounds and looked to be in her 20's. So Chacone was arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and that set us off, for here was the making of a juicy sex story. As the district attorney was a member of the Socialist administration, and as Manly was a reactionary reporter on a capitalistic newspaper, I had the inside track from the beginning, so I beat him day after day. The climax came at the preliminary hearing,
where the district attorney presented a half dozen photographs of Chacone's mirrored den of vice and seduction. The pictures belonged to the court and it would be contempt of court to make use of them without the judge's permission, which could never be obtained. But the D. A. whispered to me that the pictures were in a certain drawer, and if they disappeared for a few hours the judge wouldn't know the difference, so long as they got back before 10 o'clock the next morning. I took them to the office, had cuts made, and returned them to where they belonged. I leave Manly's reactions to the imagination of my readers, and this time he couldn't yell "fake." But there was trouble brewing. Manly went to the judge. The judge went to the D. A., who shrugged and showed the judge the pictures were where they were supposed to be. So that ended that. It's always helpful to have a D. A. on your side.

Meanwhile, however, my city editor, who was a practical joker, pulled a dirty one. He had a deputy in the sheriff's office pick up a fake warrant from the D. A.'s clerk (this time with the connivance of the same official who had enabled me to use the Chacone pictures) and at the proper moment—a few minutes after I had finished my day's work in the city room—he showed up and put me under arrest, the charge being theft of the Court's Exhibit A. I must say I acted with dignity and poise. I turned urbanely to my city editor and asked about ball and was told it would be forthcoming in a short while. He added that the Leader would fight my case, even to the Supreme Court of the United States. I then put myself in charge of the deputy and walked down the stairs, the center of interest among at least 50 people, for word had traveled fast and even the linotype operators had quit their machines long enough to see the pinch. With head up, chin out, and a wan smile on my drawn face, I walked to the street and looked up and down for the police wagon. "We'll have to walk," said the deputy. And pointing back to the entrance, he said: "You can walk back to the office." Then followed a roar of laughter, and I ducked. That was the thanks I received for getting a page of pictures of Chacone's mirrored dive of sin, vice, seduction and corruption.

At another time, Jack Johnson, the great Negro pugilist, was in town for an exhibition bout, and about the same time got into trouble over a white woman, the Mann White Slave Act, and had some other bad luck. I don't recall all the angles, but at any rate my story started off with that tried-and-true Kipling quotation about east being east and west being west and ne'er the twain shall meet. I went on with a passion-saturated report, for there was a police angle and I wanted Manly to have some more reasons to throw a fit. The story got the first page (much of my stuff landed on page 1), and then the city editor got busy again in order to add to my troubles. He lined up a dozen henchmen who were to impress on me the fact that they were defending me from Jack Johnson's wrath, that the big fighter was looking for me, and that when he found me I was to get the whipping I had coming to me for writing such an unfriendly story about such a great citizen. At first I pooh-poohed it all, but psychology finally worked, and I started to believe that I was being hunted and that I might get some bones broken if Jack Johnson and I were to meet. The telephone would ring, and some collaborator in the fake would simulate a Negro's voice and ask me to wait where I was until the party calling could get there. No threats, but a colored man obviously was trying to catch up with me, and that could mean only one calamity—Jack Johnson. So they fixed up a desk for me in a supply closet, where I did my work, with frequent reports from the city editor and staff that they were watching out for me, that I should fear nothing and they would come to my defense. A dozen newspaper men surely must be the equal of one pugilist. That went on for two or three days, and this time I had a hard time being convinced that the thing really was a hoax and that I was in no danger of being mauled by Jack Johnson. The big moron hadn't even read the piece I'd written.

I was a good target because of my
youth, my vaulting ambition, and the energy with which I strove to please my city editor. The harder I worked the more he'd pile on me, and the more likely he was to show his gratitude by some dirty trick. One evening I showed up at a downtown theater, where a local poet—Levi Pollard, I believe was his name, a Milwaukee edition of Eddie Guest, only worse—was to give a reading from his latest book of verses. They were the usual crap of the inspirational school, and I, being a student of the best in literature, took the slob seriously and wrote a long review, showing why I considered him the worst of poets, a disgrace to letters, a crime against culture, and a blot on the esthetic impulse. I gave him all I had. Then the copies of the book started showing up. Office copies (there were several) were wrapped up and delivered to my desk. I'd open them, take a glance at the miserable title page, and throw them in the wastebasket. I'd be in a hurry to get to my long string of stories and had no time for such excrement. A Western Union boy would show up with a package, and I'd sign for something that turned out to be Levi Pollard's book, which I'd throw out the window. The copy boy would run out into the street, salvage the copy, return it to the city editor, who would see that it turned up again at what he thought was the appropriate moment. Reporters under his instructions, would call up the poet and apologize for what the paper had done. He had been treated miserably by a mere cub. In fact, it was known around the office that the reporter had been drunk that night, which explained why he had mistreated the poet so heartlessly. Would he be good enough to send the reporter—Mr. Emanuel Julius—another copy, who would be sure to make amends for the dirty deal he had given the poet? He would study the book and this time write a sincere, honest review. And, of course, the poet, anxious to make a new friend, obliged, and a special messenger would deliver a copy to me. The telephone would ring, and some woman would say she was the secretary of a literary club, and would I care to come to the club next Thursday afternoon to lecture on the poetry of Levi Pollard? And so it went on for a week or more.

At another time I wrote a long story in which I used some magnificent quotations from Shelley, Byron and Keats, and threw in many purple passages that only a literateur of the first order could successfully undertake. It appeared as a signed article on the editorial page, and I was proud of it. But even this innocent effort to serve pure literature was used against me by a city editor who always showed resourcefulness in razzing me. This time his henchmen were instructed to greet me with nothing but extravagant praise about this article, few of whom had even looked at. I'd come into the office and some guys would drop everything, rush to me, grab my hand, pump it extravagantly, and tell me I was Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, Lafcadio Hearn and Edgar Allan Poe rolled into one. Another would say I should turn to fine writing, for I was the natural heir of Ibsen, Sudermann, Shaw, and Moliere. The drama was my forte. I'd go into a restaurant with some of my associates, and a waiter, properly instructed, would put down his tray and ask for my autograph. The bartender would tell his customers to wait while he came around to throw his arms around my shoulders and tell me how my article had changed his entire outlook, how he felt a new inspiration in life, and would I have a beer on the house. At first I took all this dead-pan, for I had worked hard on that article and didn't wonder that others found it high-class, A-no 1 stuff. It took me a few days before I realized I was being spoofed. But it felt good while it lasted. It was wonderful to be the sensation of the town, even though the whole business was a hoax cooked up by a sin-soaked city editor. The hoax went even beyond the office. The mayor called me up and called me Comrade Emanuel Julius, and said I was a credit to the Leader and something for Milwaukee to be proud of, and if there was anything this master of literature wanted, all I had to do was to call up the Hon. Emil Seldel and the keys to the city were mine. Victor L. Berger said he was going to write an essay on my ar-
ticle, which would be translated into German for his German-language weekly. A judge called me to his bench and praised me before the entire court, and I took it as though the commendations were coming from honest sources. The librarian of the public library wrote that if I happened to have the original manuscript of that article, he'd like to have it; that he wanted so much to put it in the room where the institution kept its most prized possessions. There were other exhibitions of cordiality and recognition for an aspiring author.

VI.

By the time I was 21 I could hold down any job in a newspaper office. I wrote about pictures, movies, lectures, novels, politics, industry, crime, government, Socialism, plays—anything but sports and society. Yet, I do remember one society story in which I had some innocent, clean fun with a dowager empress named Mrs. Archibald S. Smith. I commented on the fact that "Mrs. Archibald S. Smith's dress was so low in the back, you could see her monogram." After more than a year in Milwaukee (which I enjoyed) I went as I said earlier, with my city editor to the Chicago World, a Socialist daily that had sky-rocketed to 200,000 circulation over night because of a strike on the big dailies. I covered general assignments, for $30 a week, working as hard and as effectively as I did in Milwaukee. The big papers, especially Hearst, were sore at the way we were scabbing on the capitalistic press. It wasn't considered cricket for a Socialist paper to horn in when a group of capitalistic papers were having labor trouble. So every now and then, towards dawn, some of Hearst's circulation hoodlums would raid the World and beat up anybody in sight. They never put a hand on me because I could hear them coming and hid in the well of a rolltop desk, pulling a wastepaper basket in after me. Then I'd get the assignment to write a page 1 story telling how Hearst's goons were lawbreakers without respect for a free press. I poured it on.

Chester had taught me one valuable lesson that has always served me in my editorial work. He showed me how to chuck inspiration and get down to work. As a beginner, I'd groan and suffer over an article, writing it out in longhand, typing it, correcting it, re-typing it, and then going over the thing again. Chester taught me how to lay out my notes, pull up to a machine, and let loose. I don't mean just a news story. I mean editorials, special articles, reviews, and other heavy stuff. From him I learned how to write what I had to say direct on the machine, do it as fast as I could run the machine, and then merely read it over for spelling and punctuation, with only an occasional word changed. When Chester was through with me I could write easily, quickly and effortlessly. I was as facile as they come. That's why, today, I can do a column article in 20 minutes. I don't say the article's bound to be good, but it's sure to be the best I could do even if I were to give a week to it. Incidentally, that's the way I'm writing this history.

I never liked Chicago. It was too big, too cumbersome, too clumsy, and too ugly. There wasn't anything about Chicago that compared with New York, in my opinion, so my stay in Chicago wasn't any too happy, though it wasn't wasted time, for I got a lot of work done. I always found time to do pieces for magazines, especially The Coming Nation, which was run by a good editor, A. M. Simons, author of several important books on sociology and history. There was a roughness and rawness about Chicago that irked. I was glad to leave, and this time Chester and I headed for California, where a job was awaiting Chester. I knew that if Chester was working on a paper he'd see that I was put on the pie-wagon. He did. He was made editor of the Los Angeles Citizen, a large weekly labor paper. The two of us took care of the whole works—labor news, general reporting, features, fillers, articles, editorials, promotional advertisements, and everything else. But it was easy, compared to holding down a job on a daily. Going to press once a week was like having five days off each week. Be-
cause of the easy conditions, Chester insisted I shouldn’t be raised from $30 to $35, but should take a $5 cut. It was painful logic, but it prevailed. Then the State Committee of the Socialist Party asked us to run a Socialist weekly, the California *Social Democrat*, which we found easy. Chester got more money, but I had to continue at $25 because I “wasn’t really needed” on the *Citizen*. Chester could do all of the *Citizen*’s work without me if he had to, but as he didn’t have to, he didn’t.

Then the owner of the *Citizen*, Stanley B. Wilson, decided he wanted a good-looking monthly magazine to take care of the aesthetic and literary needs of the growing Socialist movement. He christened it *The Western Comrade*, and it wasn’t a bad-looking job at all. Rob Wagner, artist and writer, did the covers, and some amusing articles. Later he edited his own magazine, *Rob Wagner’s Script*, and a readable, entertaining, informative periodical it was.

Rob’s wit was of a high order, and I always thought it spontaneous, until I happened to get hold of his little black notebook. In it I found scores of witticisms, happy and clever phrases, and comical sayings that made sense and were funny. Some of them were checked. Those were the ones he’d already used in public. The unchecked ones were to be slipped out, when opportunities presented themselves, and I saw at least half of them come out at precisely the right moment, winning laughter each time. One of the items dealt with a statue of Pan in one of the city parks. This Pan was different, because he was smooth in the place Pan was supposed to have something, so Rob suggested that the statue be called “The Peterless Pan.” Later Chester got an offer to go to New York to take over the editorship of the *Call*. I had to leave the *Citizen*, because Wilson considered me Chester’s problem. Besides, Wilson wanted to do the work all by himself, and save some salaries. So I was cut off. But the *Social Democrat* offered to keep me on as editor, and agreed to pay me $25 a week, so I was as well off as before, even though I was on my own.

Meanwhile, *The Western Comrade* wasn’t doing so well, so Wilson told me he was going to suspend his little mistake. I offered to take it over and he gave it to me for nothing, because I agreed to have the printing done in his plant. When I got *The Western Comrade*, its circulation was down to 850. In a few months I had it up to 1,500, and kept it there. I did everything except print the thing. And each month I’d count my expenses and income and never showed less than $100 clear. I was a rich man—and all with the pen.

Editing a monthly and a weekly was an aristocrat’s job, so I had plenty of time to read, meet people, and write. I was writing all the time, and my output was impressive. In all, I spent about 18 months in Los Angeles, and liked the beauty of the countryside, the mountains, the ocean, the magnificent homes, the growing things, and the marvelous women. Hollywood was just beginning to become glamorous. All this was back in 1913 and early 1914, until just before the First World War.

I saw Charlie Chaplin, then just building his tremendous popularity. I saw him at work with Mabel Normand, in downtown Los Angeles, a half block off a busy street. Mabel and Charlie were in a knock-down-and-drag-out argument. She thought he was slowing down the act. She wanted him to hurry things up, and Charlie said, No. He was to bust her in the kisser. She had her chin out, waiting for Charlie’s blow, but instead of landing, he held back his right hand and used his left to set her chin in a better position. Then he stepped back a little to judge the situation. Then he prepared his right fist again for action, and, after a long pause, with more delaying tactics, he landed on her and knocked her down. Mabel wanted it done over again without all that wasted time, and Charlie called her an idiot, and the crowd laughed.

VII.

One day, Rob Wagner called to invite me to meet Jack London, who was doing business at a studio that was buying one of his novels. I met Rob at his studio-barn, just a few
blocks off the main part of town. Rob hadn’t done too well painting portraits—he had done a big one of Stewart Edward White—and his writing hadn’t won recognition yet, so he took a job teaching art at the city’s biggest high school, where a young fellow was one of his favorite students. He was then in his early teens. I saw him with Rob once and was told that here was a young fellow who could sing better than anyone in the entire Southwest. Rob guessed right. The boy’s name was Lawrence Tibbett.

Jack London met us in a downtown office building. I never saw more beautiful china-blue eyes. He was rather tall, well-built, trim, neat, informally dressed, and wore a Texas hat. In the article I wrote about him I called the hat a sombrero, which was an awful boner, but what else could one expect from an eastern tenderfoot? A sombrero is loose, flabby and huge. A Texas hat is lighter in color, with a harder finish and a flat, straight-out rim. In a letter, Jack London, before inviting me to visit his ranch at Carmel-by-the-Sea, scolded me about that sombrero business and added that if I couldn’t be straight about what he had on his head, how in hell could I hope to be straight about what was in his head. It was a non sequitur, but Jack London was never much of a logician.

The point of my article—which appeared in my magazine, The Western Comrade—quoted Jack London as saying that he was interested more in his ranch and stallions than in literature. Socialism, ideals, or whatever it is that’s to heal what’s wrong with the world. He insisted that he wrote a short story, not because he was in love with writing or literature, but because he wanted the money to pay for a mountain which his heart was set on getting. I pictured him as a mercenary, acquisitive penman, but I hadn’t misquoted him. Every word of it was true. The only trouble was that it looked like hell in print, and it brought him hundreds of letters of advice and sympathy from Socialist comrades, for the article had been reprinted all over the country and had been brought out in pamphlet form later. All Jack London could say was that since I was wrong about the sombrero I had to be wrong about his words. He called me a lot of bad names, and then asked me to spend the week end with him at the ranch. But I couldn’t make such a long trip, because the London place was up near San Francisco.

The fact is, I was kind to London. At the time I saw him he was finished as a Socialist. His Socialism, had he lived from 1933-43, would have sounded all right to Hitler and his henchmen. Jack London anticipated Hitler’s racism, and I’m sorry I didn’t let loose with his vile expressions and print them in the interview that angered him so. He referred to Jews as sewer-rats, he hated Negroes, and despised the Japanese. He was a Nordic blond, a superman, a member of the elite. Only his kind should be permitted to live. Inferior races should be treated like biological misfits—exterminated. His remarks about the “Yellow Peril” sounded like editorialists straight out of Hearst’s California newspapers. If I had printed that stuff I’d have really started something, and I’m sorry I kept those opinions out of print. I thought I was serving Socialism by suppressing an unpleasant fact. I’d have given better service to Socialism if I had told the whole story.

Jack London was a worshiper of force, brute strength, and violence. He thought of himself as a mighty, Nietzschean blond beast—the superman held down by sewer-rats. Darwinism meant to him the rule of the powerful, who, with clubs and cannon, were to let loose an orgy of blood and wipe out the world’s inferior peoples. Years later, when I read the horrible things said by Hitler, Goebbels, and the rest of the Nazi gangsters, I often thought of Jack London—the forerunner of their ideology in so many ways. The gas chambers would have gladdened his heart. His pen would have served Hitlerism. He was America’s first and most talented Nazi.

During my interview, Jack London kept talking about his “mate woman.” Then I got a look at that “mate woman.” She wasn’t a bad-looking sort. However, I didn’t see much to get hot and bothered about, but there’s no accounting for men’s taste in women. I’ve al-
ways been too fastidious about my women, insisting on their having physical perfection. But I could forgive his “mate woman” her plainness—at least to my eyes—if she hadn’t been such a muddleheaded simpleton. She got started on Theosophy and other forms of Mysticism, and if there’s one thing I can’t stand it’s a person who starts messing up the atmosphere with the gases of spookology. I listened to her reel off all that involved verbiage that Theosophists throw around with such abandon and then begged to be excused. I could stand no more. But she couldn’t be stopped. She looked like a hopeless fanatic to me. I should have put that into my interview, too, but I was too soft with the Londons. What I couldn’t grasp was how Jack London—a scientific Materialist, an Atheist, and a scorn of Theism who rejected every hint of the spiritual could fall for a woman who mouthed endless streams of Theosophical twaddle. Again I say, there’s no accounting for men’s taste in women.

***

Upton Sinclair is another Socialist writer who has hurt himself by his gullibility for what he calls “Psychical Research,” a fancy name for Spiritualism and related forms of Mysticism, but which I prefer to call by the plain, vulgar name of “Spookology.”

Upton Sinclair objects to my use of the derisive word “spookology,” when I write about his pathetic evortings in ghostland. I refuse to accept “Psychical Research.” It’s a bastard description, just as Christian Science is a libel on that fine, great word, Science. When I hear a follower of Ma Eddy say, “I’m a Scientist,” I feel like exploding, and sometimes I do. Sinclair’s “research” isn’t research at all. Research means an effort to conduct laboratory experiments under test conditions, and subject to the verification of other scientists. What is there about “Psychical Research” that suggests scientific methods, disinterested verification, and test conditions? It’s a case of a publicity-wise person giving a fancy name to something intellectually low and ethically reprehensible. I say all this in sorrow for I’ve known Upton Sinclair for more than 30 years, like him, admire him in many ways, and hope to see him desert mysticism and turn to sane, realistic thinking.

He has made good contributions to the literature of protest, to the cause of humanity, and it’s a shame to see it clouded by meanderings in the fogs of ghostland. When Sinclair puts his feet on the ground and keeps them there, he’s a credit to literature and an artist of great usefulness. But when he goes into his seances and sees tables floating in the ether, he at least partially undoes whatever good he has done.

I know exactly how Sinclair will react to these sentences, in which I plainly betray my impatience, disgust and anger. He has done it before. He will put on his sweetest smile and say how sorry he is that I am so mistaken, that he really would like to help me see the glorious light, and that he stands ready to make any sacrifice to help me over the rough spots into the land of sunshine and love. Sinclair always turns both cheeks, with the result that neither gets slapped, at least by me.

***

Los Angeles, in 1913, was still hearing echoes of the McNamara case, for Clarence Darrow, hated by General Otis’ Times and the union-crushers, was on trial for allegedly trying to bribe a member of the McNamara jury. It was persecution. Darrow had to be punished for his defenses of labor. I wrote a lot about Darrow, and saw him often, for he made his home in Los Angeles from the time he took over the defense of the dynamiters to the end of his own long trials. Of course, the State couldn’t make the charges stick, but Darrow had to go through many months of effort, worry and expense to escape the traps set for him by California’s reactionaries, the country’s most bitter, merciless and vindictive. I recall my intimate touches, such as the dandruff on his shoulders, though I was far from today’s newsmagazine that separates its subjects into “jug-eared, bumbling,” and “able, alert.” Darrow and I went to lunch together once, and were received by Darrow’s favorite colored waiter, who had been
trained to answer the lawyer's "Who comes?" with this quotation from Shakespeare's "Richard III": "Clarence, false, fleeting, perjured Clarence, that stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury." Darrow, without a doubt, was the Wittiest, most humorous man I've ever known. When in the mood, which was often, his conversation and speeches would sparkle with witticisms. As his twist of humor was exactly the kind that suited me, I was always laughing or smiling while in his presence, which probably made me a welcome companion, for no humorist can get far without a sympathetic audience.

Years later, I saw him in action in another court trial—at Dayton Tenn., where he defended Teacher Scopes in the famous Evolution Trial and fought William Jennings Bryan, described by H. L. Mencken (who also attended the trial) as the tin-pot Pope of the Coca Cola Belt. Darrow broke the great Commoner's heart and left him to die in little Dayton one hot, Sunday afternoon while the bigoted Fundamentalist and intellectual medievalist snoozed after a dinner of a half chicken, a bowl of mashed potatoes, three ears of corn on the cob, a quarter pound of butter, a half loaf of bread, scads of gravy, an eighth of a large watermelon, and three-fifths of a home-made pie, washed down by four cups of coffee.

Before his trial in Los Angeles, Darrow made many speeches, especially to working people, and wound up with a big Sunday afternoon crowd in the city's largest theater, where he talked for two hours on what he thought was the matter with the damned human race. There was a laugh a minute. These public meetings were Darrow's indirect way of meeting the torrents of abuse from the Times, which thirsted for his blood. In one of his talks he got off on the razor-back hog. He'd been discussing the Darwinian struggle for existence, eugenics, selection, adaptability to environment, and related subjects, so the razorbacks came into the lecture. Darrow maintained that from man's viewpoint the fat, helpless hog is the good hog, but from the hog's point of view, the razorback was the better hog, because he could get out in the timber and keep himself alive, while the lard-coated favorites of the abattoirs could do hardly more than settle down to die.

Darrow was effective in court because of the great pains he went to before a trial began. When on a big case, he would spend months toiling over his facts. When he had all his facts straight, he was ready to fight before the jury. His tactic was to challenge every debatable assertion, every move of the enemy. He never granted favors, nor expected them. It was fight, fight—fight—a constant, endless, tireless pounding away at the facts, the contradictions, the suspicious utterances, the hints of perjury. He always took plenty of time and tried to make sure he was winning or holding the sympathetic attention of the men in the jury-box. His talks to a jury might go on for days. He would converse for hours in a dry, conversational, seemingly careless tone. His facts would be outlined to the finest detail. Then for a while—perhaps 10 minutes or two hours—he would rise to magnificent oratory. At times he would thunder. Every bit of strength in him would be poured into his argument. He knew what each jurymen was thinking, and he was determined to present arguments to meet every possible idea or notion that the jurymen might have. I don't think there ever was a more brilliant trial lawyer than Clarence Darrow. And yet, I've seen him asleep in court while his case was being tried. Always aided by anywhere from three to a half dozen assistants, Darrow knew when to let others take charge. If he knew what was coming during the next half hour, and if he felt tired, he would settle down in his chair and doze for 15 or 20 minutes. Then he would wake up and take charge of a witness, and his new alertness showed how much he had gained by that short nap.

Darrow loved to write, lecture and debate. The perfect extrovert, he liked to meet crowds. His printed works fill quite a few volumes. There are his famous appeals to juries. His plea in the Haywood case fills a fat book. I printed his plea in behalf of Loeb and Leopold, and the thing is a full-sized book. Most of his lectures were reported steno-
graphically, and many of them he sent to me during the '20's and the '30's for inclusion in my Little Blue Books or in my larger volumes. They have always been good sellers. He refused to accept payment for manuscripts that represented many days of hard intellectual labor. He liked to attack religion, the God idea, immortality, the soul, "spiritual realities," clericalism, Christianity, and numerous other subjects dear to the hearts of millions of Good People. Darrow was the Devil's Disciple.

In Dayton, Tenn., the pious Baptists and Methodists looked for his horns and tail. He was a Freethinker, and he hated to hurt anyone. I'm sure it pained him when he reflected how his heterodox ideas grieved those who disagreed with him. If only he could separate people from ideas. He would even pal with the people who were his enemies, and at the same time slash away at the ideas that struck him as dangerous forces for exploitation by shrewd obscurantists and empty, inane, childish superstitions by their gullible followers. He would like to please—please everybody, for he liked people—but that was impossible.

Once he was visited in his Chicago office by a committee of Christian Scientists who begged him to intercede in their behalf and prevail on me to withdraw two Little Blue Books that were especially offensive to them—booklets on the life of Mrs. Eddy and on Christian Science itself. Darrow, who hated to disappoint them, wrote me a pathetic letter, in which he told me how nice these people really were, and that it would be wonderful if I could do something to gladden their wounded hearts. After all, it would be a good idea to leave them alone, even though we both knew that they were spreading the worst kind of dangerous bunk. And yet, the next time he was on the platform, he might just as likely aim a broadside at the nonsense of Christian Science.

On the platform, he faced only the ideas of Christian Science, and he hated them; in his office, he faced the people who believed in those ideas, and he felt sorry for them. When he faced Bryan in court, he was kind and tender with him whenever they conversed together, but when Bryan died shortly after the trial, Darrow, who was resting somewhere in the Tennessee mountains, told the press that God had been looking for Darrow but couldn't find him because he was hidden in the mountains, so he had taken Bryan instead—and it was a good thing for the world that he knocked him dead, because the man was a nuisance and a menace to civilization. When he was with the man, he loved Bryan, despite his ideas, but when away from him, Darrow threw the individual in with his despised ideas and slammed away at both.

Darrow wasn't a Socialist or a political or social radical, but felt sympathy for all leftists, including the Anarchists. In fact, his main philosophy, for years, was closer to Anarchism than to anything else. He rejected Socialism because it was a house that hadn't been built for human beings, he said. The door was in the roof, the windows were on the floor, the bed was halfway down the cellar, the chimneys were aimed into the sewer, and you couldn't get in or out of it.

He was a Libertarian, Freethinker, Atheist, Materialist, laughing pessimist, and ardent defender of the individual. He believed in freedom. He went hunting for chances to fight those who would light the fires of bigotry. He enjoyed living, liked good company, excellent food, and moderate quantities of liquor. He smoked cigarettes chain style, loved to travel and meet people, and, above all, preferred to stand before a large audience and expound his ideas, whether for money or gratis.

Darrow was the kind of man who would reject both Fascism and Communism. He was an F.D.R. type of New Dealer. He knew the program wasn't big enough to meet the situation, but it looked all right for the moment. It might lead somewhere. That was his position on Henry George's Single Tax. He often endorsed the theory in his speeches, although he knew there were scores of social problems this Georgean program could not even approach. But it made people think
about social problems, so it was a good thing.

Darrow wasn’t an economist. He practiced Political Science by ear. He was, as I said before, a great stickler for facts when defending someone in court, but on the outside, facts didn’t bother him much, though what he did say was usually on the side of accuracy. He never, so far as I can remember, even quoted anything from a statistical source in discussing social and political questions. His attention went to first principles, to his philosophy, to the general pattern of his ideas. When talking or writing on Free-thought, he was always consistent. He would look up sources, especially in the Bible. He went to great pains to make his pleas for Free-thought convincing, but when he presented them he did so with wise-cracks, gags, epigrams, jokes, irony, and satire. He seemed to be frivolous, and yet he managed to put over the basic ideas to which he had gone to such pains to support with sound data. And yet, he never went out of his way to please his audiences. Many times he would be downright insulting.

While in Florida one winter with E. W. Howe, they were both invited to make speeches at a great gathering. There must have been 10,000 people present. The Governor, who introduced Darrow, referred to “this vast audience of intelligent people.” When Darrow got up, he looked over his glasses at the tremendous audience, took them all in slowly, turned to the Governor and drawled: “Hell, man, there ain’t that many intelligent people in the whole world.” He liked E. W. Howe, because they both liked to puncture bunk, hypocrisy and humbug. Once, Howe said: “My pet aversion is the Boy Scouts. What’s yours, Darrow?” Darrow: “Mine’s the W.C.T.U.” Both shook their heads in solemn and satisfied accord, as though to admit there was something to the other’s case.

The two old men agreed on Free-thought, both were Atheists, Howe was the better writer, but in political and government matters Howe was a rank individualist, a reactionary, while Darrow leaned to the liberal side. When Howe visited me at my home in Girard, he told me he didn’t consider the telephone a success, that it was a nuisance, that its use should be limited to military and business matters, but should never be permitted to intrude on the individual’s private life. The airplane, he was sure, was just a fad, that could never be more than a dangerous toy. He believed thrift was the greatest virtue. But Howe was a fine writer and an honest, sincere student of people. He always said exactly what he thought. Darrow didn’t always do that, as I’ve shown. Howe was always the same, whether in his newspaper, his books, or his conversation. His rather dumb son, who runs a newspaper in Amarillo, Texas, once wrote about Howe’s appalling frankness. The son actually apologized for his father’s intellectual honesty. The son was a member of the Episcopal Church and believed everything that his father rejected. The son toaded to the preachers; Howe offended them. Here’s how the son summed up his father: “If my father had only kept quiet about these controversial questions of religion, and other subjects, he could have become as great a man as Will Rogers.”

Howe, like Darrow, liked to see his works in my series of Little Blue Books. He bought hundreds of copies, which he passed out even when he was up in the 80’s. Howe and Darrow would exchange Little Blue Books. It may be that they got to be friends through those booklets. Once, Howe, who could be naive at times, asked Darrow: “Just what is the difference between an Atheist and an Agnostic?” Darrow gave the usual answer—the Atheist rejected the assumptions of Theism, while the Agnostic said he didn’t know there was a God and that there was no way of finding out, and so on. Howe studied a while and said: “Then I must be an Atheist, except I go further. I know there’s no God. I know there’s no immortality. When I die I’m dead, and that’s all there is to it. Are you an Agnostic or an Atheist, Clarence?” “Oh,” said Darrow slowly, “when I’m alone I suppose I’m an Atheist, but when I’m talking with people I sugar the pill with the word Agnostic.” Howe smiled at Darrow’s reluctance to offend people.
to hurt them. "They get a lot of consolation when I use the word Agnostic instead of Atheist," said Darrow. "That's the trouble with me," said Howe, "I don't even have the consolation to be had from the knowledge that I'll be going to Hell when I die. That's why I've held on so long and want to stay longer —I've a lot of work I still have to do. Why, only the other day the editor of The Saturday Evening Post asked me to write my autobiography. How's that for an old man?" "Will you tell about your Atheism?" asked Darrow. "Don't see why I shouldn't, but I can't guarantee they'll print what I say." And so went the endless discussions in those sunny, warm days in Florida —between two old men whose minds were still vigorous, who loved life with the fierce vitality of sun and soil, who wanted so much to stick around longer because there was so much to say, to write, to do. There's no strength like that of determined, vigorous old people. But the machine's wound up for just so many turns, said Darrow. The best one can do is to keep from wrecking the machine. It wasn't long after that Florida winter that the Howe and Darrow machines both slowed down and stopped. Both went out as Materialists and Freethinkers. They gave no word of comfort to the religionists. They went out quietly and calmly, the way Darrow used to do in court when he could sneak a 20-minute nap.

* * *

Job Harriman was another lawyer with whom I had frequent meetings in Los Angeles when Darrow was in trouble and I had been cut from the Citizen. Editing the Social Democrat and The Western Comrade brought me into contact with Harriman, who was the leader of the Los Angeles Socialists. Not long before, he had put up an immensely effective campaign for mayor, and almost had the job in the bag, when the McNamara case blew up with a bang and the men confessed, leaving Harriman (one of the defense lawyers) out on a limb just a few days before he surely would have been elected. The morning after the news of the confessions got out, the streets were strewn with Harriman's campaign buttons and literature.

Job Harriman—who was a tall, thin man in his late 40's and who looked and talked a lot like a Shakespearean actor—had been fighting T.B. for many years, so that he would work a few weeks and then spend weeks in bed. But he loved to fight on the platform and in print, which drove him to over-exertion and to an early death. He was a successful lawyer, but hated the profession. Once he told me: "I'm in the worst possible profession. All the community's dirt passes, like a sewer, over a lawyer's desk. But I like politics and would like to be a writer."

Harriman worked many years on a book that I saw in manuscript, entitled, "The Mechanical Theory of the Universe," a study in Materialism. Harriman, like most of the Socialist leaders of his day, was an Atheist—a type not welcomed in the Socialist Party of today, which is led by a pious preacher of the gospel and which even tries to flirt with the Catholic hierarchy with a view to cooperative political action when conditions are ripe. Harriman drove me out to his country home, far from Los Angeles, so he could read the Ms. to me without interruption. He lived in the city but spent a night now and then in this handsome, deserted place. The Times had bawled him out heartily for his impertinence in building for himself a beautiful home while the comrades lived in hovels, but Job Harriman never let unfriendly publicity worry him.

When we reached his place it was late, and I was tired, so that I can report that I heard him read many pages from his Ms., but haven't the remotest idea of its contents. I was too sleepy to concentrate. Listening to a musical voice drone long, involved sentences, filled with hard words, wasn't an experience for a sleepy young fellow. It was torture. But I'm sure there was a great deal to Harriman's philosophy. I've always been a Materialist, and if he expounded the ideas properly there's little question that the book had merit. I doubt it was ever published. At least, I never heard about his book in later years. If the Ms.
is still around, I'd like to get a look at it.

There was a group of Christian Socialists who hated Harriman because of this book, about which they knew only the title, but that was enough for them. One of them, Stephen Maynard, an old fellow who joined Stanley B. Wilson as an editorial writer on the *Citizen*, was a Christian Scientist and a Christian Socialist. His religion meant more to him than his political creed. Another Christian Socialist—I don't recall his name—worked on the same staff as labor reporter. Both the editorial writer and the labor reporter had cancers—Maynard's on his upper lip; the labor reporter's on his rectum. Both denied they had cancer. Both denied there was such a thing as cancer. But the labor reporter died a few weeks later of his cancer, which sent the man with the lip cancer to a hospital, where a surgeon cut out what didn't exist.

* * *

After Darrow left, Harriman (who had been Eugene V. Debs' running mate on the presidential ticket in an earlier campaign) turned to the idea of colonies, which shocked and angered the scientific Marxians, who called him a utopian Owenite. Debs, who never liked Harriman, called him "the Uriah Heep of the Socialist movement." Just about this time, which was in the summer of 1914, I got word from Chester M. Wright, inviting me to join him on the *Call* in New York. I accepted, resigning immediately as editor of the *Social Democrat* and looking around for some way to get rid of *The Western Comrade*. Harriman, who had made arrangements to take over some large acreage many miles north of Los Angeles, needed an organ to promote his colony scheme, so he offered me $1,000 in stock for the magazine, which I accepted. I then looked around a few hours and sold the stock for five $20 gold pieces, which was more than enough to pay my way to New York. I had already saved about $1,500, so I felt prosperous.

I wished Harriman luck, but I had no faith in his colony. Being a stirring speaker, he was able to drum up a following in a matter of weeks. Each put in $1,000 in cash, so the money poured in. The land was good, but it needed water if the desert was to be turned into a garden. And there wasn't enough water. So, after a few years, Harriman had the whole outfit moved to Louisiana, after which he pulled out to die. He wasn't much of a colonist towards the end, assuming he ever really believed in the scheme.

Nobody can feud like a colonist. The membership usually is made up of workers and fighters. And the fighters are geniuses in finding different things to fight over and different ways of slugging it out, including involved court actions. One member, according to Harriman, went to the colony store whenever fresh meat was issued and took her share home with her, where she always threw it in the garbage can. She was a vegetarian, but she hated the others so much that she was determined not to permit anyone to enjoy a privilege she couldn't take part in, even though it meant the waste of food.

Harriman agreed, with a sad look, that it's going to take a lot of education to prepare the workers for life as it has to be lived in colonies. Religious comrades seem to make the plan work now and then, but political associates can't, because they lack the proper education in cooperation and mutual aid. Just how the workers are to be educated to become loyal and true colonists I don't know, nor did Harriman. The idea of an oasis of Socialism in the desert of Capitalism is pure utopianism, I was told by the Marxists. They may have had something there.

* * *

I was glad to leave Los Angeles. I'd had enough. But my stay had been productive. I now felt sure of myself as writer and manager. I knew I could hold down a job on any newspaper or magazine that struck my fancy. I could do a workmanlike job, and always enjoyed doing it. It seemed to me I was being paid for playing. I'd have been willing to pay for the privilege of doing the work. In Los Angeles, I got myself rounded out and ready for any situation in the field. But at the same time I was glad to leave. New York beckoned; the city
I had always given first place in my likes. New York is great, beautiful, majestic, magnificent, exciting, thrilling, exotic, dramatic, charming. Chicago struck me as only big and ugly. Milwaukee I liked, because it's an attractive town and full of charming, friendly, delightful people, but that's about all I could say for it. Los Angeles struck me as growing, but without vitality (remember, this was in 1913-14); a garden of roses without aroma; winters without snow; manners without culture; beautiful places, buildings, homes and scenes that made me think of the sets erected in the movie studios: a population eager to be duped by mountebanks, evangelists and con-men; a heaven for religious circuses; a headquarter for fanaticism, snooping into people's private lives and beliefs.

I leave the Los Angeles of 1948 to others who know what the city's doing today. I returned only once after leaving for New York. It was in the early 20's, and I remained only six weeks, much of which time I spent with Upton Sinclair, Charlie Chaplin, and Rob Wagner. Chaplin was in the turmoil of a fight with his current wife. I forget her name, but I saw her several times and she looked like a simp. Charlie said she got on his nerves because of her habit of talking to him and at the same time pulling her waist forward for long looks at her teats. Charlie paid off, as he always does. He had just finished "The Kid" and showed it to me in a hotel room, with a pinned-up bed sheet for a screen. I loved it.

Upton Sinclair was living in Pasadena, and it was through someone I met at his home that I met Prince Hopkins, a young millionaire who liked to edit small, serious, profound magazines (printed in excellent format on fine paper) and who was running some sort of a modern school for precocious children. It happens that I don't care a lot for precocious children. I look on children as things to be nursed and tended, and left pretty well alone. I don't like to play with children more than five minutes at a time, and I'm not the least interested in their ideas or opinions. So far as I'm concerned, you can keep them in colonies like the one Job Harriman started.

Hopkins was fired with new theories about educating them. For example, I learned geography out of a textbook, and I didn't make such a mess of it, for even years after attending school I remembered that the Mississippi River is where it is, that the Atlantic is to the East and the Pacific in the opposite direction. Hopkins didn't accept such old-fogy ideas. He taught geography by supplying the kids with shovels and putting them to work digging out the country they were studying. It sounds reasonable, but I know that I could learn more about the Mississippi River reading in a textbook than by digging it under a hot sun. But as I'm not an educator, I urge my readers to pass over this as the dogmatism of an uninformed, inexpert amateur.

I was interested to meet a young fellow whose name was Sidney Greenbie and who worked with Hopkins as one of his assistant educators and associate editor. The Hopkinsses lived in Santa Barbara, one of the swelliest spots for the rich in the country. Sidney lived with his rich patron, and as Hopkins was admitted to the most exclusive houses because, among other things, he wasn't a Jew, and since Greenbie was a Jew, he wanted me to help him keep his terrible secret. Of course, I had no desire to interfere with his social life. And if he wanted to hide his origin, that was his business. But I had never before seen such a look of self-pity and suffering as I saw in the eyes of this Jewish lad who was getting by because he looked gentle, whatever that means. His fear was that I'd let Hopkins' friends know that his assistant and friend was a Jew. It was a pathetic case. How he came out I don't know, but I wish I could find out. Did someone turn him in to the social leaders and get him rejected by the Best People? Here was a form of racism that I hadn't seen before—the kind resorted to among the rich and educated. I had seen only the crude, violent kind in Philadelphia and other places, where to be a Jew meant to invite open insults and beatings.

To be a Jew among the coarse and ignorant means familiar sufferings.
I had seen many demonstrations as a boy when I lived at 1326 Germantown avenue, in Philadelphia, a neighborhood which then teemed with Irish Catholics. They would come rushing out of the huge church on nearby Girard avenue, with cries of "Christ killer" whenever they saw a Jew, or, seeing none, they would gather near the homes of known Jews and greet them with their priest-taught maledictions. I had seen gangs of hoodlums go searching for Jews, and, meeting one, they would give him a working over. I had seen them rush my mother's little store and grab anything in sight, with cries of "The Jews have all the money!" The ignorant and brutal mobs, small and large, would strike down poor, helpless men and boys with curses, and those who didn't curse yelled that the Jews were pushing Christians off the sidewalks and taking their jobs away.

The anti-Semitism of the wretchedly poor was an old spectacle, but here in California was a cultivated, refined Jewish young man who was shrinking before the dreaded threatened ostracism of the educated and socially superior. The look of pain and horror in the face of frightened Sidney was even more tragic than the vile outbursts of the uncouth and ignorant. The extremes met. I had seen the latter many times, and had shuddered, but here was my first experience with the bitterness and prejudice of the upper classes. I didn't see them, as Sidney begged me not to expose him (as though I would do such a thing), but I pictured them as just as merciless as those mobs of Catholic hoodlums. Their way of stabbing a Jew was just as ruthless and brutal.

I had early learned how to meet such behavior. With the violent and ignorant, the only sensible thing to do was to run away. Arguments, appeals to decency—all were fruitless. Fly from them as one runs from the plague. To win them over is impossible. Avoid them, and go about your business.

I had learned, from my first experiences in employment, in business, and in social gatherings, that the same thing was to shut one's eyes to their savage bigotry and move on. I had seen often how the whole atmosphere in a factory or office would change once it became known that a little, $3-a-week kid was guilty of the offense of being a Jew. In a hundred ways he was made to feel hostility and blind hatred.

In higher spheres, the same quick and blind, though somewhat subtler, resentment prevailed. I found it even among Socialists, Freethinkers, professionals, teachers, and persons who described themselves as Liberals. When a Jewish editor hired me because he thought I could do my job, the word went out that the Jews were ganging up to get rid of the Gentiles and take the bread out of their mouths. When I was the only Jew on a newspaper staff, I was given more to do than any other man on the paper, was paid less by more than half than any other worker was paid, and then made the butt of jests and slightly veiled insults. If I did something well, I was not a good newspaperman but a "brilliant Jew." If I wrote an amusing story, I wasn't a good writer but a "witty Jew." I was never permitted to forget my origin.

The only answer, I learned early, was to work harder, do more than was expected of me, expect less than any others were paid, and be made to feel inferior and endured. But that very passion for extra services makes new enemies. That means the Jew is showing aggressiveness. If he mingles freely, he's a pusher. If he stands aside and quietly tends to his job, he's exclusive and standoffish. If he marries a Jewish girl, he's unassimilable. If he marries a gentile girl, he's trying to "pass as a white man."

Learning early that the cards were stacked, I always expected the worst and was surprised when given an even break. Just what it was that put me aside I never was given to understand. No one really knew. Was it religion? Well, it happens that I became a Freethinker while still only a boy and never accepted any more of Judaism than I believed in Catholicism or Protestantism. Was it a matter of race? Just what race does a Jew belong to? Is he a race apart? Is he a member of the Jewish race? Then it's in order
to ask if there's such a thing as a Jewish race. Is there an anthropologist in any great university who's ready to assert that there's such a thing as a Jewish race? I always took myself to be a member of the Caucasian race. But no one seemed ready to grant the validity of such a classification. And no one seemed willing to accept "him" as an equal. Even when treated with decency and fairness, "he" was given to understand that he should appreciate such a demonstration of humanitarianism.

So, the only thing to do is to smile and get to work. That has always been my answer. When insulted, I close my ears and look for a new, hard task, and try to do it. I don't know of any other answer. It isn't comforting, but it works somehow. After all, why waste emotional energy because one can't enter a certain club or dance with a certain social group? Dismiss them. Stay away from them. One can live without their company, so long as they put no legal or other obstacles in the way of those who would get along without their company and make productive and creative use of the time to do better and more effective work. If I'm not wanted in a certain neighborhood, I'm willing to stay out of it. I prefer to build my own environment and function in it as best I know how, and I believe that in the end such an attitude, if carried out properly, can do much to buttress one's position.

Cut away from unfriendly people and create your own world. If that world is worthy of respect, it'll attract the kind of company that will give you real satisfaction. True, not every Jew can follow such a course. But for that minority that aims at superior tasks and strives to perform them, it seems workable. Don't worry about your situation. Don't mope. Don't fret. Do your job well and make the best use of your chances. It's worked in my case. I have created, through toil and brains, an atmosphere that's my own—free and stimulating. It's so secure that no bigot can strike through my defenses, so long as the laws and customs defend me in my right to function and to assert my personality. Just how many can follow such a course I don't know.

I'm not generalizing. Each must work out his own salvation. But I grant I've never in all my life felt absolute security.

I can understand the attitude of those Jews who say that the wise thing to do is to keep your possessions in such a form that you'll be able, on a second's notice, to carry them with you while you jump over the backyard fence and make for new pastures. You're never given the right to feel that you belong. That explains why so many Jews arrange their affairs so they can carry the fruits of their years of toil in a small handbag and beat it when things get too hot. "The Wandering Jew" really describes the Jew who must be ready at all times to wander from what he thought was his own to a new environment. Such is the condition, and there's nothing to be gained by complaining. Logic is unavailing. Appeals to decency are futile. To fret too much over the problem is to fall into a condition of neuroticism. Get as many laughs as you can garner. Eat well in order to remain strong. Keep your health so you can live longer. Don't expect anything good, and be prepared for the worst. Always stick to your chosen work so long as you don't feel the hot breath of bigotry on your neck. And when you're torn from your work, pack up and look for a new environment where you can begin where you left off, but always with the reservation that the bad experiences of the past can always strike you down again. It's the philosophy of the hunted. It makes for hysteria. A test of character is to laugh and joke lest sanity go running. Keep your sense of humor, your appreciation of the limitations that are set against you—and go ahead with your work to the last minute. Do it so well that no one else can outdistance you. If you're a first-rater, you're still handicapped. If you're a second-rater, you're doomed.

Whatever you do, don't look for pity and sympathy. Don't live in fear like the Sidney I spoke about. Better to stand on your own feet and meet them frankly and candidly, with the determination to make yourself effective because you have made yourself strong. All weak individuals can hope for
friends, except the weak Jew. He is condemned to loneliness. But good work can fill that loneliness with color, excitement, achievement and victories. And if he's struck down, at least he can point to a record of attempts to do the best of which he was capable. If you run a peanut stand, run a good one. If you make a buttonhole; make the best buttonhole ever put together. If you write a book, try to make it the best book ever written. Such a tactic won't assure you of success, but it'll bring you deep satisfaction, even if you're struck down.

When I urge a quick retreat, I mean, of course, escape from scenes of possible violence or some other overt act. If the situation is a purely verbal one, then I stand my ground at least long enough to express myself. For a long time I was annoyed by people who would, for no apparent reason, suddenly ask: “Just what is your nationality?” Or perhaps more bluntly: “Are you, by any chance, a Jew?” Such questions don't deserve direct answers. Now I always reply quickly and rather sharply: “Just why do you want to know?” The question confuses the nosey and potentially unfriendly inquirer and usually draws the remark: “Oh, I know it’s none of my business, but—” “Yes, but you must have had some reason.” The result is that a person who thought he might place another in a position of self-defense finds himself making his own apologies.

Another thing one should always do is to refuse to be present during exhibitions of racial or group prejudices without expressing some sort of objection or protest. I never let even a “slip” pass without some sort of response. If some one drops the word “nigger,” I immediately pick it up and say how that word distresses me. The next time the word’s used, it’s followed by some sort of an explanation or excuse. I protest again, usually politely. After that, the word can be expected to remain unused. If a person in a social group goes so far as to ignore the sensibilities of others and expresses racial or group sentiments or opinions that are derogatory, then the offended one has an equal right to express counter feelings, even though there follows a moment of strain. I take this stand without compromise and always make it stick even if it means withdrawal from the scene. If a group is slandered or lied about, the ugly words should be branded for what they are. Potential bigots don’t relish the thought of associating only with their kind. The problem is how a single individual, in his small way, can help keep such people from placing their own ugly kind in positions of group prominence. Some good can result from countless millions of short, polite protests against anti-social behavior.

* * *

On my 25th birthday—July 30th, 1914—I left Los Angeles for the job in New York. It was as hot as the hinges of Hell, and when I got to Needles, California, it was still hotter—perhaps 120 degrees. For some reason that I can’t fathom, I kept my coat on. Leaving Southern California wasn’t hard to take. The killing heat, the limitless impudence of real estate and other commercial boosters, the paucity of intellectual and literary activity, the brazen provincialism of the section’s brash leaders and sheep-like followers, the cavortings of pulp-it-pounders and Bible-spouters, the sickening obscenities of the smut-smellers and professional enemies of fornication, the mental emptiness and artistic sterility of Hollywood (where anything can happen), the savagery of the industrial overlords, the purity that carried the odor of chemical cakes in men’s urinals, the weakness of all forms of publishing except the standard press, the brutal race propaganda against the small and helpless Japanese minority, the raids on Iowa and other midwestern states in order to swell the population, the pathological passion for political nostrums, the crusades of quacks and humbugs, the vast market for eccentric religions, the theft of the savings of the old people who had come to live out their remaining days, the hounding of liberals, progressives and radicals by the Hearst–Oitis newspapers, the hostility to honest controversy, the easy pickings by miracle-mongers—all passed through my mind as my train headed east. True, most of these objectionable things would
be encountered in any other American city, but in Los Angeles they were always worse. In other cities there were respected voices to challenge bunk and fraud; here the opposition was impotent, almost mute.

But I had made fair use of my stay in Los Angeles. I had made myself a better editorial worker. I had added considerable knowledge and experience. And I'd had pleasant romantic episodes with charming and interesting young women. I liked them, and loved some of them, but there isn't much I can say about them 35 years later. Many people prefer to be silent about their sexual behavior on grounds of morality and expediency; I say little, because I find them somewhat on the dull side. You meet a pretty girl, you say nice things, you get a biological lift, you feel she's willing, you push your cause, you end together—so what? This world's filled with over 2,000,000,000 people, and all who are sexually competent have gone through the same thing, more or less.

I didn't try to improve on Casanova's record, but I got around. As a lover I showed no outstanding, prodigious, or expert talents. I pleased, I disappointed, I outdid myself, I fumbled, I provoked a flutter, I was hot, I was cold, I caused a few palpitations, I left some passions unburnt. I wasn't a superman. I did my best, but often my best wasn't enough. I was no Valentino—and, by the way, I know of no evidence that even hints that Valentino, with all his romantic looks, was any more gifted sexually than the rest of us third-raters. Sometimes I'd lure a girl away from some fellow; and sometimes the other man would walk off with my girl. There was hardly a time when I didn't have a girl around, for if I didn't have one I'd hunt one up. Here I'm reminded of the young man who, after being without a woman for six months, returned to where women were to be had, and commented that it's funny how far a man can get behind in his loving—and how fast he can catch up. So, let me save you the ordeal of listening to long discourses on the relative merits of efficiency and technique of Eugenie, Myrtle, Maud, Clara, Ruth, Constance, Becky and some others whose names I can't recall at the moment.

However, I'll go so far as to say Eugenie was such a natural-born educator, that when this Montessori-of-the-boudoir found me ignorant on some delicate point, she'd teach me. On the other hand, Constance was overcome by a sense of shame, sin and wickedness. She'd go through with it, but keep mum every second of the time, and when it was over and she was finally on her way, she'd bewail her wantonness and wonder what kind of girl I took her to be, and what would her mother, uncle, cousins and neighbors say if they ever learned the awful truth about her weak character, and, on her honor, it could never happen again, but it did. Maud was in "love with love," as she put it, and never thought of sordid things, but always managed to get something for her trouble. One couldn't call her a professional, because that kind must be paid in advance, while Maud always collected afterwards. Becky agreed to join me one evening for a 10-hour stay in a suburban hotel, and when I met her she was loaded down with two huge suit-cases, which embarrassed me because I got winded carrying them and because they made us look really married. I've worked myself clear across the country and back, and I made it all the way on one piece of luggage. Twice-married Ruth invited me to a week end in her mountain cabin, but when I got there I found she'd installed her mother to watch over her daughter's good name. After a few hours of this unwieldy triangle, Ma brought out a couple of bottles. Before they were gone, all inhibitions melted away, and I was stuck with Ruth and her ma. Estelle drove me to a country boarding house, where the cynical old codger who ran the place greeted us with the question: "Are you married or are you from Hollywood?" Henrietta was a German girl who couldn't speak a word of English, and I knew hardly more than a dozen German words. She came to my place one hot night in mid-July and quoted pages of Goethe's poems. In the morning, I was awakened by a
draft. She was leaning over the bed fanning me.

* * *

I had left the coast at a time when the air was full of war talk, but no one was excited. The assassination of Austria’s crown prince hadn’t thrown the country into a frenzy. No one imagined the war machine had been set going. But each day the headlines grew larger and the stories from Europe became longer. In a few days Germany, Austria, France, Russia, and England would be at war. A huge conflict seemed out of the question, what with the habits of peaceful thinking, the anti-war policies of the Socialist parties and union movements of Europe, and the avowed hostility to war by Socialist leaders in important positions. It seemed likely that there would be a threat of war, and then would follow demonstrations for peace by the Socialist masses and general strikes by organized labor. But nothing like that happened. The armies marched to the field—Socialists, trade unionists, pacifists, and others obeyed orders and Europe was aflame. Even then it didn’t seem real to us in America, and few thought that it could continue long, or that it might involve us. The failure of the Socialists to stop the aggressors was a blow that hurt. But few blamed the Socialists. The country took the early months of the war as a vast sporting event. We really went about our daily tasks as before. It was too bad about these European countries, with their kings and czars, but they were far away and we felt cozy and out of harm’s reach.

My train companions were more interested in what there’d be to eat the next time we stopped at a Harvey House. Three times a day we stopped, and each time we enjoyed the best of food at 75c a meal. Here was the nicest side of Capitalism, I thought. The Harvey Houses make Capitalism attractive. They make the Class Struggle and the Unearned Increment seem distant, if you have the 75c, and most of us did. Some ate out of paper-bags, but they were mostly parents and their numerous children. There was always more than enough of the best and well-cooked food, served by pretty waitresses in attractive uniforms. A meal would be served to 70 or 80 passengers with such efficiency that we’d be through in 20 minutes. Heaven must be spotted with Harvey Houses, assuming the Ethereal Esquire knows his business. I don’t recall a single conversation about the war during all of the trip, and it took six days. The country was serene and those of us who had plenty of coins seemed to feel that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world. I realized anew the vastness of our country by the fact that I ate at so many Harvey Houses and still remained within our territorial limits. I slept many nights, and still the Pullman remained in the U.S.A. We crossed many state lines, day after day—six days—and still we were in the land of the brave and the home of the free. A tremendous, teeming, productive country that breathed strength and energy. I was glad my parents had sense enough to arrive in this country in 1887, otherwise I might at that moment be carrying a gun and looking for someone to shoot. It felt good to be a native-born American. One got a feeling of security. Two oceans and a hundred million Americans who could take care of themselves, should anyone try to cross those oceans and try to do us up. There wasn’t anything wrong with the country that a good editorial or pamphlet couldn’t cure. It was my simple theory that if anything struck me as evil, the remedy was to pull up before a typewriter and tell about it. I’ve always felt that way. Whenever I’m particularly outraged, I think in terms of the printing press. A well-written, widely distributed pamphlet should dispose of any social problem. All we needed was a strong press and, presto, poverty, war, imperialism, crime, unnecessary sickness, unemployment, old age insecurity would disappear in a matters of months, or perhaps a few years, and the country could be turned into a utopia. It sounds naive, and yet what’s wrong with the idea? A press that functioned honestly and freely for the genuine reformation of the country could get tremendous results, though I’m
willing to concede now that it won't be done in a matter of months, or a few years. The fact that it'll take many years shouldn't discourage us about the task of creating a vast, independent, free-spoken, honest press. Such a press means education for the masses, and educated people can do anything. We still lack such a free engine of publicity, and that explains, in some measure, why we are so far from achieving the goal of economic independence and democracy. We have the right to a free press, but we are still to build a press mighty enough to really educate the people and move them to sane, constructive, scientific solutions of their social problems.

I thought some ways along those lines as I rode across the mighty, seemingly limitless U.S.A. I had already given more than five years of my life to writing for the press, and I looked forward to a lifetime spent in the same work. The standard press, aided by reactionary churchmen, movies and the radio, keep the masses in economic servitude and insecurity. Undoing their work will be the hardest part of the task of reaching those masses with something that will counteract the poisons of religious, political, economic and educational bunk. They own the biggest and best presses, vast paper mills, and hired brains that are clever and shrewd in their ability to entertain their readers so they will overlook the behavior of their social masters. They entertain and indoctrinate them so they'll believe the system that exploits them is the best of all in the world, and that that system means the American way of life. Any other system that would really correct social injustices must be branded as un-American, and the masses must be conditioned to not only reject such teachers but hate and persecute them as well. But on that train-ride I wasn't discouraged by the size of the standard press. We would see to it that the country got a different kind of press, and then all would be hunky-dory.

* * *

Yes, I was 25, and I was on my way to become Sunday editor, literary critic, and reviewer of plays and music. Beautiful, majestic, throbbing, active, alert, sensitive New York was calling me back, and I was glad. I had always been happy there, even when broke. Seven years before, when 17 years old, I had left Philadelphia with less than $2 and tried to make the 90 mile trip to New York by trolley cars. I had read a piece in a newspaper which described how it was possible to take a street car in Philadelphia, and by making changes here and there one could land in New York. It was figured to cost something like a dollar, and I thought it worth trying, because I had only $2, while the train-fare was several dimes over that amount. After nine hours of riding the trolleys I was still about 20 miles from the city, and dead tired, so I bought a train ticket and finished the journey in comfort, landing with just enough money to put up at a Mill's Hotel, which at that time, I believe, charged only 25c per night. I may have had a few pennies for breakfast. At any rate, I went out for a job and soon got one in a cheap restaurant, carrying dirty dishes from the diners to the kitchen. I was to work from 11 to 1— the lunch-hour rush—for which I was to receive a meal and 50c. As I could eat all I wanted, I figured I could get by on the 50c until something better showed up. But at the end of my first hour on the job I was told my services wouldn't be needed any more. I was handed 50c and told to eat the meal to which I was entitled. While eating a bowl of beef-stew, I asked the boss why I was being fired. Frankly, he said, I couldn't expect to hold down such a job because I lacked experience. He had watched me carrying dirty dishes from tables to kitchen, and he could see at a glance that I wasn't a professional dish carrier.

Next morning I was in Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson, where I'd been sent to take a job as bell-boy in Miss Mason's School for Girls—about 400 pretty and rich virgins. My pay was $16 a month, I ate whenever and however I pleased, and I read and read. There being little to do, the library became the most important thing in my life. The woman in
charge was old, tiny, wrinkled, gray, bent, and cranky, but I got along with her beautifully. I was young and she was old. I liked her because she was interested in me, in my mind, in what I wanted to read, and in what I should want to read. She started me off with Emerson's Essays, and they opened new worlds. I was already set on becoming a writer, so these months in a school for girls served me well. Emerson's style attracted me by its simplicity, strength, clarity, directness and originality. I had read hundreds of books by scientists, philosophers, historians, economists, novelists, and others, but had never read a line of Emerson's. It didn’t take me long to read every word of Emerson’s that the little, dried up librarian dished out to me. She would hand me a new volume of Emerson and ask me how I liked the one I’d just turned in. I'd tell her this essay was great, because it showed a realistic, hard-boiled mind unclouded by superstition and mysticism. But this other essay was bad, because the author rejected his own better work and let himself express ideas that were dim-shadowed, vague, remote from reality, and devoid of his usual vigor, health and naturalism. She was pleased and thought I might like to read Carlyle’s "Sartor Resartus," which I did, and found it a delightful experience.

Then came Mark Twain's stories, and here I surrendered to a new admiration, for I'd never looked into a book by Mark Twain before. The author himself was living somewhere in the neighborhood, she said, and maybe I'd get a look at him. After reading about 10 of his books, I saw the little giant himself — slight, beautiful, charming — who had, for some reason, dropped in. I've never been afraid of celebrities. In fact, if there's a celebrity around, I don't rest until I meet him. I simply walk up and start to talk, and never ask for autographs. I found out that Mark Twain, while not a Socialist, had radical ideas about economics, hated imperialism, and was more of a critic than a supporter of Capitalism. I copied many paragraphs in which Mark Twain offered his pow-
erful criticisms of the system, and later, shortly after Mark Twain died, I put them into an article, entitled "Mark Twain: Radical," which was published in a somewhat highbrow magazine, The International Socialist Review, for which I was paid the handsome sum of $10. My Mark Twain reading at Miss Mason's school had paid a generous dividend.

While working there, I saved a little and made quiet use of my spare time to write numerous articles for the Socialist press. One correspondent, who noticed that my address was John D. Rockefeller's hometown, warned the readers of a paper, the name of which I can't recall, that I must be a labor-sweating exploiter of labor and that I should write for The New York Times, where I belonged, and not in a Socialist paper that was edited by workers for readers who aren't parasites.

My dried up librarian kept feeding me the best books anyone with my ambitions could hope to find. She would scold the girls and other teachers, but when I showed up her tiny fist-sized face would light up and she would look positively attractive to me — the only person in the world who could talk to her at any time and get courteous treatment and intelligent concern over the state of my intellect. Many of the articles I wrote about this time appeared in the Call, so not long after it wasn’t hard for me to get that staff job I wrote about before. I would show these crude little pieces to my librarian friend, she would neglect 50 girls to read them, and then tell me what she liked, and what didn’t look so good to her. She helped me with special books that taught me a little about the use of words, punctuation, spelling, construction, and the like, along with volumes intended to help beginning writers. She liked me, I soon saw, and I liked her, because it was nice to have one’s mind mothered by this gracious, helpful, charming woman of at least 65. I repeat: I could say she was all the nice things I've just said about her, though everyone else insisted she was a little demon and the kind of personality that would have brand-
ed her a witch in earlier New England days.

She introduced me to Washington Irving, an author whose every page pleased me. Of course, I read him for pure entertainment and because I liked his flowing style. She took me in a carriage to Washington Irving’s home and then to his grave. She pointed up the river—the school overlooked the beautiful Hudson—where she said the things Washington Irving wrote about had happened. She drove me to Mark Twain’s home, where we met him again and talked some more. Now I could talk about his own magnificent books and he was pleased. The librarian told him about my ambitions and he nodded slowly. He was then in his 70’s and release was soon to come.

Later my little friend in the library gave me a book of essays by Hamilton Wright Mabie, and here I revolted. This, I told her, was rubbish, trash, conventional garbage, and everything else I could say that would let her know how I loathed this priggish, prudish, dull, unimaginative writer. He might be famous, but so far as I was concerned he was a pest and a nuisance. She smiled approvingly and mentioned something about wanting to know how I’d react to this famous American essayist and assistant editor of The Outlook. She had been testing me, and I had come through with proper marks. Then she let me read her copy of Smart Set, and here I found out for the first time about George Jean Nathan and Henry L. Mencken. They were right up my alley, and I’ve enjoyed their writings ever since. Even though there’s little about Mencken’s political and economic ideas that I agree with, I do agree with him on his criticisms of the current scene and his general philosophy of life, his love for freedom of expression, his hatred for humbug, and his contempt for religious notions. I reported to the librarian that I intended to read this pair from now on and she thought I’d never be disappointed in them, if I liked writing men who knew how to put on a good show.

Shortly after I left Miss Mason’s school, I read on the obituary page of The New York Times that she had died. She had been my friend and mentor. She was the only person in the school who meant anything to me—the one who was supposed to be mean and cranky. She was the only person on the faculty who had a full set of brains.

Miss Mason herself was only a businesswoman who ran her school the way a competent grocer serves his customers. It was an educational rolling mill to turn pretty virgins into capable, successful wives. Daughters of millionaires were all over the place, and one day there was a terrific scandal. A French gardener—handsome, dark, tall, debonair, cultured—had been visited often by one of the students, and he had treated her the way a Frenchman should handle a beautiful and equable woman. He poured on the courtesy, and the girl responded with calf looks. Soon she was writing him notes, and he was writing her some, too. Then he left for New York, but wrote her a letter telling her how to meet him, for just what reason I didn’t find out. The letter was intercepted by one of Miss Mason’s spies. Miss Mason hurried down to New York to interview the gardener herself, to find out how far he had penetrated this beautiful charge of hers. He assured her that he hadn’t ruined her—yet. She came back in triumph, and reported to the girl’s parents, who had been called to the school to meet this tremendous crisis. They waited around as though they were expecting the delivery of the body of a loved one. She was still a virgin! God, what a narrow escape! If that letter hadn’t been stolen, she might now be without honor, name or maidenhead.

And speaking of virgins brings to mind the time Hamilton Wright Mabie came to lecture one evening at the school. (I couldn’t sit in the assembly hall with the 400 virgins, but it was permissible to have a chair just beyond the door and lean over into the hall to listen. A form of educational Jim Crow.) He was introduced by Miss Mason—a short, chunky, mannish, baritone-voiced woman in her late 50’s—who described him as one of America’s great writers and most important literary critic. Then the lecturer
took over, and it was full of inspirational rot and conventional ideas, cliches, and dull verbiage. One part of his lecture was an ode in praise of chastity. "There is nothing more precious, more divine, more beautiful than a chaste woman. Chastity is your loveliest possession. Preserve your chastity and your soul is safe for eternity," he droned, or words like that. Vulgarians of a later period would describe such an outpouring as crap. Later, when the lecturer had reached the door while leaving, he was taken in charge by the little librarian, who said: "Oh, Dr. Mable, I want you to meet this young man. He has read several of your books. He may be the only person who heard you tonight who really has read your works." He beamed and bowed slightly in my direction. "Yes," I said, "I've read your books, but I can't say they were any better than your lecture, and that was my idea of an inferior performance." I had dropped a bomb. A half dozen people drew back, horrified, but the librarian smiled. "A remark like that," said Dr. Mable, "must be judged in the light of its source." "The source," I replied, "is a reader who enjoys good literature, including Emerson, a man so big that you can't reach up to touch his shoe-laces." "You may have read Emerson," said Mable, his oiliness back again and his face smiling, "but perhaps you were too young to appreciate his purpose. He was in some ways an enemy of the spiritual life, but here I blame him for his background—the Unitarian Church—which I have described as the Church for Retired Christians." He expected his brilliant response to leave me crushed. "He left the Unitarian Church," I countered, "because it was too conventional for his type of intellect. He was bigger than any church." "I have no time to waste in idle debate with someone who appears to oppose spiritual realities." And with that the session ended, in my favor, I felt, and with the approval of the librarian, but Miss Mason didn't like it at all. I expected to be fired, but wasn't. Maybe the librarian had something to do with my not being canned. Bawling out the mighty was an occasional sport with me. Some time before this Mable affair I was in New York and called at a church near 42nd street on 6th or 7th avenue, where the parson in charge was the Rev. J. Wesley Hill, who at that time was getting a lot of publicity with his anti-Socialist speeches and sermons. I had read several printed reports of his tirades and felt I should call on him to set him right. In my teens, I believed all critics were merely misled and could be turned in the direction of the truth by a little talking to, or, better still, a pamphlet. The Rev. Wesley Hill plugged at two points—Socialism meant Atheism; Socialism meant Free Love. I was an Atheist and a Socialist, but I believed I could clear him up and end once for all his harping on a point that would keep many good people from joining in the crusade to bring in the new society. So a boy walked into his first-floor office in the church building, where he was met by a woman who, in those days, was called an office girl, but now would be referred to as a receptionist.

She called for Dr. Hill, who responded at once, and I saw a rather heavy, paunchy, thick-shouldered, moon-faced, bald man in middle life. When he asked what he could do for me, I said I'd read his attacks on Socialism and thought them unfair. "And what," he asked, "did I say that was unfair?" It was his habit of tying up the political and economic program of Socialism with belief in God, I told him, and smearing a worthy cause with the unpopular word, Atheism.

"But," cried the preacher, "how many Socialists can you name who aren't Atheists? Since you're a Socialist yourself, may I ask if you are an Atheist?" I had to admit I was. "So there you are. My case is established," he announced, with a shrug. But here I was only getting started. I still had my pet argument to draw on, one I'd been holding back until the Man of God had had his say. I let him have it. You, Dr. Hill, are a Republican and not an Atheist. That is your right. But suppose you were an Atheist, Dr. Hill, would your Republican program be worthless as a consequence? One of the greatest orators and leaders the Republican party ever had was the
great Freethinker, Heretic and Atheist, Robert G. Ingersoll. In the political field, he was a Republican, and respected as such by his associates, but in the religious field he was a dissenter and Atheist. Each was independent of the other. I went on to argue that since the Republican party couldn't be blamed for its Ingersoll, neither should the Socialist party be blamed for its Atheists. I thought this simple illustration would end the parson's campaign, that he would express regret over his ignorance, and that he would make amends by telling the public about his misinterpretation of an obvious situation. But it didn't work out that way. "I have no more time to waste on a pimpl-faced boy!" he yelled. "There isn't a pimple on my face," I countered, "and if I had a hundred pimples my arguments would still stand or fall, depending on whether they were based on the truth or on lies. Socialists insist that religion is a private matter. Party members and leaders can be Atheists, Agnostics, Freethinkers, or Christians, as they prefer." Dr. Hill had had enough. "I have no time to waste on a person who is insipid-looking," he grumbled, and walked into his private office. The office girl pointed to the street door and I left, puzzled that my mission of sweetness and light had failed so abysmally. How was it possible for a presumably educated and prominent man to shut his ears to the simple truth? I decided the situation demanded a few more editorials, articles and pamphlets.

The teen-aged boy returned to his books and scribbling and gathered material for pieces that would put the world to rights on a topic that sounded ominous but wasn't at all tragic, once the facts were understood. But the more I dug into the subject the more difficult it became in my own mind. The Republican-Ingersoll argument should have been sound enough to move the Rev. Hill to an abandonment of his propaganda against Socialists because of their Atheism.

It was at this time that I went to the Labor Church, at 3rd avenue and 14th street, where I heard the country's most vindictive and savage bigot lecture to an audience of Fundamentalists, a few Socialists, and a half dozen Anarchists. He was that old crusader for the Lord— Anthony Comstock. For almost two hours, Comstock boasted of the carloads of literature he had confiscated, of the thousands of pictures,
devices, periodicals, pamphlets, and other forms of expression. He told how many men and women he'd forced into prison, how many had committed suicide, and how many he had served well in the work of glorifying His Holy Name. Comstock was then in his declining years, but he still had the old fanaticism.

What surprised me was the presence of so many young men who showed by their applause that they favored a campaign of suppression against the freedom of the press. No one challenged Comstock—powerfully built, bald, whiskered, shrill and aggressive—no one had contradicted him. But towards the end of his speech a short, stout woman arose in the center of the hall and cried: "How many people have you murdered, Anthony Comstock?" It was like throwing a bomb.

Comstock glared at the woman, recognized her, and thundered: "I am being interrupted by one of my old enemies—Emma Goldman! She believes in obscene, immoral literature. She has a filthy mind. She defends the criminals I lock up. She is a bandit. She herself belongs in jail." And then the fracas really got started. Emma was accompanied by Alexander Berkman and Ben L. Reitman, three who weren’t afraid of a thousand Anthony Comstocks, and could be shut up only by being thrown out of the hall. No one made a move to oust them, so the charges came thick and fast. The three rebels fought brilliantly, but the crowd was with Comstock.

Emma, in one of her five-minute talks, charged Comstock with having destroyed thousands of copies of precious works of literature—the classics—by great geniuses like Rabelais, Boccaccio, and other free-spoken, unshackled artists. Here Comstock went into a wild dance, pounding the table and jumping a foot in the air, clapping his hands and beating his chest.

"I don't believe in protecting the classics when they are filthy and immoral," yelled Comstock. "Just because a writer has a big name, it doesn't follow that his immoral outpouring should be permitted to circulate. I say a great classic can be just as rotten morally as the rottenest immoralities of some obscure, or anonymous, writer who has his sewerage prepared in hidden, cellar printshops. The country must be cleansed of sin and immorality, and if the classics stand in the way they should be destroyed. Think of all the adolescent boys who have been driven to masturbation by these writers of classical obscenity, and how many of them have been made insane by their masturbation, all brought on by reading classics. If you want never to see your sons indulge in self-abuse, then I beg you to support me in my war on bad, immoral classics as well as other kinds of filth. How can we expect boys to remain pure and free of the urge to masturbate, if we let the dirty classics fall into their hands?" And so on.

At this point Emma Goldman broke in with: "How about the Bible?" "Yes," yelled Berkman, "have you suppressed any editions of the Bible, and put the publishers in prison?"

Anthony Comstock laughed. "There is that old argument of Emma Goldman's back again! She doesn't believe in the Bible—she is a godless Atheist—but she is worried about my society suppressing the Bible. The Bible isn't a classic at all. It's the Word of Gawd! And how can one who wants to walk humbly with his Gawd stand by and see His Precious Word branded obscene and suppressed? There isn't an obscene word in the Bible if it is read properly and accurately translated."

This was the break Emma was waiting for. What about ...? And she threw out about a dozen references which had to do with incest, fornication, adultery, bestiality, and other forms of behavior.

"You mustn't tear out sentences from Gawd's Word," thundered Anthony Comstock. "You must take the whole book or nothing. Emma Goldman takes nothing, but uses some to put up her argument for license and lust in literature." And so it went for more than an hour—the hottest exchange of arguments and insults I'd heard before or since.

Anthony Comstock presented
himself as a nasty, neurotic, smut-obsessed fanatic—a dangerous, brutal and merciless foe; a natural torturer and inquisitor; a sadist. He frightened me. After the meeting I was afraid to come close to him. I had several arguments to put forward, but I shuddered as I drew a little nearer. A professional bigot is a frightening spectacle. So, here was one celebrity I was afraid to talk to and present what I thought were sound arguments. Instead, I moved over to the three anarchists, who were surrounded by at least a score of black-suited young men, who made no threatening moves but did express their disapproval among themselves over the presence of three devil-inspired enemies of righteousness and holiness. I then learned that all were students at a seminary.

Later I got to know Goldman, Berkman and Reitman quite well and admired them, even though there was much in their case I couldn't accept. The three had a neat, bright, attractive apartment near the Labor Temple where I'd first met them, and I made several visits there. Emma and Berkman were lovers, while Reitman's position never was made clear. I don't think he was much interested in Emma as a sexual partner, his interests running more to homosexuality.

Emma Goldman was editing her pocket-sized magazine, *Mother Earth*, which I read regularly. At the little flat I found pamphlets and books by Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Malatesta, Goldman, Berkman, Thoreau, Herbert Spencer, and many others. I admired and enjoyed Alexander Berkman's "The Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist," the history of his famous attack on Frick and the 28 years he had spent in the Pennsylvania penitentiary. I told him how I liked his literary style, and that sent him into the clouds. It was obvious that he was waiting for just such a form of praise—for his literary artistry.

From then on he was my friend, and whenever he got into trouble with the police and wanted to hide out, it was a cinch for me to find out where he was and delight my city editor with the stories I'd bring in, for Berkman would always let Emanuel Julius enter, no matter where he was holed up. He hadn't committed any acts of violence himself, but whenever there was an outbreak, the police would begin questioning him, and he got tired of the ordeals.

There was a section that believed and practiced direct action—propaganda of the deed, they called it—but I know of no evidence that could charge Berkman with having participated in the acts, outside of that original attack on Frick when he was hardly more than a boy. Berkman was the student type, and showed it in his pamphlets. Emma was the fiery agitator and mass orator. Her literary style was clear, bold, direct, and often logical and persuasive. Her scorn could pulverize mountains. When she let loose on an enemy she'd spout flames. Reitman was hardly more than a hanger-on. He was something of a business manager and literature seller.

Whenever Goldman or Berkman, or any other Anarchist lectured, Reitman would be there with a suitcase crammed with pamphlets, which he would sell like an inspired pitchman. He did a wonderful job and I admired the way he'd begin with about 400 pamphlets and end up with none. He did it all by speaking a while on the theme of each booklet and then walking up and down the center aisle. Dimes and quarters came toward him at a fast clip.

Later he went to Chicago, where he opened an office and served the down and outs for years as a clap doctor. He was a legitimate M.D., and a good one, I was told. He made a thorough study of Chicago's underworld and wrote the finest book ever done on pimps, entitled, "The World's Second Oldest Profession," a book that I read with great relish and appreciation. Towards the end, Reitman became some sort of a Christian.

When I saw him once in the New York flat, while he was still an Anarchist, I asked him how Anarchism would meet the problem of crime and anti-social behavior, since he opposed the very existence of the State, and its weapons of repression,
suppression and punishment. I myself thought crime would be done away with when social conditions were right—that is to say, when the Socialist commonwealth provided an environment that knew no poverty. It was my theory that crime is the result of bad conditions.

Reitman, on the other hand, insisted that the Anarchist would do away with crime through the use of the weapon of education. People would be educated away from every form of anti-social behavior. Berkman, as I said before, was the real scholar of the group, as anyone will admit who has read his powerful, well-constructed pamphlet, "The A.B.C. of Anarchism," the product of a good, keen, shrewd, probing mind.

Later, during the Palmer red-baiting drives, Berkman and Goldman (who had never become U.S. citizens) were shipped out of the country and deposited in Soviet Russia, where for a while they tried to work with the government of the Soviet Union, but soon found this impossible. They hated the Communist state just as much as they hated the Capitalist state. She finally landed in Canada, through some trick that compelled the authorities to admit her. She married (without ever having lived with the man) a British coal miner, probably paying him for this service. This gave her the legal right to settle down in Canada, where she died after a few years. Berkman landed in Paris, where he wrote and spoke against the Communist State. Then, broken in health, he shot himself.

* * *

Only a half dozen blocks from the Goldman apartment was the Rand School of Social Science, then located at 112 East 19th st., in an impressive, three-story brown-stone house. There was a restaurant in the basement, run by Piet Vlag, an office, bookstore and library on the first floor, classrooms on the second floor, and rented rooms to prominent Socialist lecturers and writers on the third floor, including that prince of pamphleteers, George R. Kirkpatrick. I spent a lot of time in the Rand School library, where dozens of American and foreign Socialist newspapers and periodicals were always available, and a useful (though still small) library of Socialism and related themes. I did a lot of studying and writing in that old-fashioned, high-ceilinged room. The place was quiet and inviting. I felt my mind expand several notches.

Opposite the Rand School was the tall and impressive building of the National Arts Club, where many famous writers and artists lived in expensive, swell apartments, including the then super-popular novelist, David Graham Phillips.

Several times I found myself sitting near a fellow in his 20's—a first-rate violinist, who always came into the Rand School library carrying his instrument case. Then he managed to rent a small room in the front of the third floor, a location he made great efforts to get, for a reason soon to become banner headlines on all the front pages of the metropolitan area. He was a high-strung type, black-haired, black-eyed, about five feet 10 inches high, dressed in a black suit. He walked with long strides, quietly, like a black panther. We got so we'd nod to each other. Then we talked a few times. He had little to say about his music. He was interested in psychology, particularly abnormal behavior. He studied the best books on crime that the library had. He'd read a while and then whisper, "Why do people want to kill?" I'd whisper (the lady in charge frowned when she heard readers holding conversations) it was because of the social injustices of Capitalism. Capitalism is itself a huge crime, so it breeds crimes and criminals, but this angle didn't appeal to him. He wanted to know what I thought about people who killed even though they had health, money, position, education and a bright future. I simply replied that such people don't kill, but he said I was wrong, and proved it.

By a strange twist in his head, the fiddler got around to the opinion that David Graham Phillips had written about his sister. At that time, he and his family were living in a small Pennsylvania city. Convinced at last that the novelist was spying on his sister and the rest of the household, he moved to New
York, where, as I said, he finally got the front third-floor room, opposite the club where Phillips lived. He'd watch from his window and study when the novelist left or entered his club. After a few weeks of this he acted. Waiting for him as Phillips stepped into 19th street, the neurotic fiddler shot him dead.

* * *

One day, while still in my teens, I decided that while I had failed to talk the Rev. Hill out of Socialist-baiting. I would go down near the end of Manhattan and show Daniel De Leon why he should carry his tiny Socialist Labor party into the growing Socialist party and bring the newspaper he was editing—The Daily People—along with him and the party he dominated. Anyone with a newspaper in tow was important game, especially to me since I looked on a newspaper not only as an engine for political usefulness but as another batch of columns that I could fill with my pieces. I found De Leon explaining fine points of policy to some of his editorial associates. This he did with the air of a professor explaining a complicated problem to students pretty sure not to grasp the subtler lines. This writer, lecturer, translator, political and union organizer, and theoretician of the one and only Simon-pure brand of perfect, scientific, Marxian Socialism, had massive shoulders. Years later, when I first saw Clarence Darrow's strong chest and big shoulders, I thought of Daniel De Leon. He was already well on in years, but he bellowed when angered, and he was almost on the verge of bursting a blood vessel when he dismissed his uncomprehending co-workers and walked back to his desk, where he found me waiting for him.

"What is it?" he asked, giving me hardly a look. I didn't bother to tell him who I was. Instead, I sailed right into the heart of the issue I had in mind. "The Socialist Labor party," I began, "insists that the American Federation of Labor is a capitalistic organization because it is organized along craft lines. Am I right?"

"Yes," replied De Leon, curtly, "of course, of course."

"You and the Socialist Labor party won't unite with the Socialist party because you say trade unionism must go and industrial unionism must be accepted as the basic idea for the working class."

"Yes, yes, of course, of course..."

"Well, don't you see the logic of the Socialist Party's position—to let problems of union organization rest with the unions themselves. We must remain neutral. We must let the unions decide for themselves whether they want trade unionism or industrial unionism."

This, of course, was the official position of the party of Berger, Hillquit, and other S. P. leaders. Giving me a look of pity, as though I were just a squirt of a cockroach trying to get into a tangle with a lion, De Leon asked:

"Do you, as a Socialist, believe in the Class Struggle?"

"Yes, of course."

"Do you believe that the Socialist parties of the world must be a part of that Class Struggle?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then you agree when I say that Socialists cannot be neutral when engaged in the Class Struggle?"

Again, yes.

"Do you believe that the unionization of labor is a part of the Class Struggle?"

Once again, yes.

"Then, how can your Socialist party believe in the Class Struggle and at the same time be neutral on an issue that springs from the Class Struggle?"

I had no answer. I had been whipped. I made my excuses and walked away, leaving De Leon to return to his writing. I had to admit that as a theoretician he had me groggy. I had picked up a few slogans at the Rand School and other places, and had dared repeat one to De Leon himself. A teenager can be reckless at times.

* * *

It was about this time that I began to look into my manners. I must have been about 18 years old when I decided to watch how celebrities acted, and follow suit when their behavior struck me as attractive. I spruced up. Noticing that it got on people's nerves when I or anyone else cracked his knuckles (a tic that I'd learned from my father)
I decided never again to do it before anyone. I hope I've kept that resolution.

Once, while dining with John Spargo, in Yonkers, I was impressed with the way he broke off a small piece of bread and buttered it, instead of buttering a whole slice at a time, as was my way. I didn't want "sassity" manners, but I did want to do a number of things in such a way as not to terrify sensitive people.

Years before I had observed that many people don't like to see one remove nose-crusts, and favored removing their hats when eating, even in an Automat. A solid grip on knife and fork I decided was ugly, so I watched eaters like John Spargo—then a popular Socialist speaker and writer—and did things their way. I soon developed an easy way of holding knife and fork, though I never approved of the way the swells of jabbing the fork in a morsel, then putting down the fork with the left hand, and then picking it up with the right. That looked bourgeois. It wasn't long before I could eat in such a way as not to destroy the appetite of anyone within range.

I had my hair cut at least once a month, watched out for ear-wax and dark islands in the folds of the ears, and scooped out all real estate under my finger nails. But I didn't ape everybody. One day I lunched with the famous Socialist and humanitarian, William English Walling; a fine-looking gentleman who belonged to a family of millionaires. He ate like a Grand Duke. Once I noticed that he was having trouble with something in his teeth. He shook open a huge napkin, draped it over his right hand, took hold of a toothpick, and while he sawed away in his mouth he covered half his face, and kept it covered until he got the pieces out. That was putting on too much of a show, I thought the napkin routine was too elaborate and prissy. Better, I thought, to let the thing remain and tackle it when no one was looking, than to go through such a vigorous, elaborate pantomime. One's manners should be selective. What Walling did might have been all right for Walling, but for me it would have been a bust.

The first lesson I had taught myself years before the Walling and Spargo lessons was to see to it that the spoon didn't remain in my coffee cup. I had heard some eaters joke about gouging out my eye, so I took it they were using the josh-method to get me to quit doing something they found offensive. After a little watchfulness and self-criticism I became simple and orderly in my habits. I felt at ease with the best brains in the country—and those best brains usually had manners that were from fair to good. This doesn't mean I'm a stickler for etiquette. I haven't read 10 pages of etiquette in all my life. From my teens I developed easy, simple manners, and that was the limit of my desires. I was trying to make myself over to be on terms of equality with intelligent people, not to shine among social parasites.

As for my dress, I could walk into any store and buy a $7.50 suit or overcoat right off the shelf, and make them fit as though they'd been made by a $30 tailor (those were the prices I knew about in the second decade of the century), for I had the figure for such purchases. I could buy a new outfit from hat to shoes in those days for less than $25. I was always neat, and missed few meals even before I got steady editorial employment. I lived in cheap rooms because I spent little time in them, except to sleep. There was too much going on to permit me to waste non-sleeping time in my room.

Later, when I returned from Los Angeles just as the first World War was getting under way, I took a large room in the Benedick Apartments, on the east side of Washington Square, and it cost me $4 a week. This included maid service. I stood well with the maids, elevator boy, clerk, and manager, because I always had a pocket full of theater tickets and handed them to those I wanted to please. Of course, I kept the good shows for myself, but there were at least a dozen houses that ran second-rate vaudeville shows—I never wrote about them—and they kept me supplied with as many tickets as I could use. I got more with my theater tickets than the other residents did with their cash tips.
Next door to me was a Columbia University professor who kept a small apartment just for his week end meetings with his colored sweetheart. She used to come in Saturday mornings and stay with her dignified professor until late Sunday night or Monday morning. I knew everything that was going on there, because the shocked maids were my friends and wanted me to be up on the latest scandal. The Negro woman came in heavily veiled, and when there had to be maid service, she'd duck into another room. The professor had a wife and family up town, but for years he'd been enjoying this love affair, said the maids, and seemed happy in it. She wasn't a young woman, I was told. Perhaps in her late '30's, which to me at that time meant early old age. That apartment must have cost him at least $25 a month, which showed me to what extremes some men will go in order to be able to make regular love and enjoy the company of some especially desired woman.

Down the hall was a famous surgeon of about 45, a man who had a tremendous practice—and he was a homosexual. He kept this apartment right at the east fringe of Greenwich Village so he might entertain his favorite boys, most of them musicians and actors. He was busy in his profession and energetic in his sex life. The maids didn't know which to be more shocked over—the professor or the surgeon.

On the floor below was a beautiful, charming girl named Anna Marcelet Haldeman. She was a Broadway actress and was successful, too. I saw her several times in the elevator, but never spoke to her. We lived in the same house for months but never met to speak. Her home was in Girard, Kansas, where her late father had been a banker, and her mother was carrying on the family business. When her mother died, she went to her Kansas home to take charge. Later I met her in Kansas and she became my wife, the mother of our two fine children, and the grandmother of Alice's daughter, little Marcelet. But my wife never saw that grandchild, for she died on February 13, 1941, after we'd been married 25 years.

Holding down my job gave me little concern, for by now I knew what should be done and how to do it. I did my work quickly and efficiently, and had plenty of time to comb the town for interesting and stimulating company. By this time I was a little of a celebrity myself, so I had no difficulty meeting the leaders of thought, the men and women who were doing good work, and those who were just plain fun. I even carried a stick.
The Dumbness of the Great

A SURVEY OF THE NONSENSE, ABSURDITIES, INCONSISTENCIES, ILLOGICALITIES, INACCURACIES, AND IDIOCYES OF THE WORLD'S OUTSTANDING LEADERS

This new 60,000-word book, by Joseph McCabe, could be described as a history of ignorance. Sharp-eyed, and equally sharp-tongued, McCabe shows the mental caliber of the men who have served to keep man in the mist. The guesses and statements of the world’s oracles—ancient, medieval and modern—make up an entertaining volume, one of the best that the world’s greatest scholar has done in many years. But McCabe has a serious reason in recalling the hundreds of absurdities he has garnered in a long life-time of study.

Joseph McCabe’s "THE DUMBNESS OF THE GREAT" is useful in this transitional age of ours, where the old and the new, the true and the false, mix in paralyzing confusion. McCabe teaches us—even with good humor—to distrust all oracles of the past and realize that they lived in ages of such ignorance that even the eye of genius was astigmatic. True, we live in the most advanced hour of intellectual sunshine that the earth has yet known. And that’s all the more reason for revaluing the leaders who are misleading millions today or who worked centuries ago to keep the brain of man in chains.


"THE DUMBNESS OF THE GREAT" costs $1 per copy, prepaid. Mail orders to:

HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS, GIRARD, KANSAS