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The Golden Touch

HOLGER J. KOCH.

The story of King Midas, human, deluded unhappy king of legendary antiquity, who was given the rare opportunity to carry a false and fatal philosophy to its ultimate, logical conclusion, symbolizes one of mankind's most tragic experiences. King Midas, like so many others, wanted wealth; and when some sardonic god—or was it a wise one?—offered him the power to turn any object into gold simply by touching it, the king fell headlong into the trap. Here at last was satisfaction for that gnawing hunger with which humans are born: the hunger for ENOUGH WEALTH! Feverish with desire, King Midas created gold in piles. Then, having sated his avarice on gold in such quantities as stunned the imagination, he stretched out his hand to satisfy his hunger at the lavish table he could now afford, only to have the loaves, the viands, the fruits turn to a golden mockery under his touch. As they fell from his numbing fingers, a great fear clutched his heart. What had happened. What had he done to himself? Would he die of hunger in the midst of such wealth as the world had ever wanted and never seen? Claspings a beloved child in his arms to feel again the living warmth of human companionship, he reaches the ultimate and terrifying consequence of greed: his own flesh and blood dies under his lethal touch to swell his now accursed hoard of gold. . . . Tragic King Midas! Tragic millions who kill their souls and the souls of their children with gold and the lust for gold; and never know it as King Midas knew it.

The king's opportunity to carry the philosophy of wealth to its logical conclusion is rare in history; but not so the philosophy. It is present everywhere in the profit motive and is practiced wherever the object of men's work and desire is personal gain rather than the common welfare. What measure of moral values and human relationships have been turned to ashes under the golden touch of greed, we have no way of knowing; but the loss to the

race must be frightful and constant. The fate of King Midas must be the portion of men if their desire is for wealth in quantities small or large according to their greed and skill. His fate completely if they succeed completely, partially if they succeed partially.

The story of King Midas leaves us no choice of interpretation. Its truth is clear and irrefutable and its impact is not to be softened by rationalization. However, it might be permissible to attempt an application of the fundamental element of the legend to a region of life diametrically opposite the one in which the story moves. Even without straining the original metaphor, as gold in the course of time has come to signify two elements in human life as far apart as the poles: on the one hand merciless egotism, on the other all that is genuine, noble and precious.

So we come upon another Golden Touch which in every respect is the exact opposite of that which brought damnation to King Midas. The magic wand of the creative human personality which touches the gross and the lifeless in matter, in character and in human relationships and stamps upon them the imprint of spirit and nobility.

The history of mankind should be written in terms of creativity. Apparently civilizations survive while they remain creative, and flourish in proportion to the depth and quality of their contribution. As long as this creative process endures the cultural and spiritual level of the race is heightened; the upward motion subsiding with the decline of creative activity; the new level becoming at once both a monument to the past and a foundation for future advances.

Essential truth does not vary with time, place, size and circumstances. What is true at any given point and circumstance is true everywhere at any time. What is true of civilizations is also true of the individual. Codes of morality and modes of thought may change from place to place, from decade to decade, but never moral law. It follows then that in the life of the individual, survival of the personality is coincidental with its creativity. In fact, where no spiritual creativity takes place, essential human personality cannot be said to exist. The oft-quoted objective of the Folk-School as expressed by its practical founder, Kristian Kold, that young people must be wound up so

they will never "run down", presents in a homely simile the eternal truth that life is coexistent with creative activity whether in civilizations or individuals. This activity, of course, does not include the struggle for economic or political advantages, or any effort that has for its objective the securing of privileges for the individual and the group.

It can hardly be asserted that we, as a people, rate highly in creativity. Our technical development and material production are, of course, overwhelming. We unquestionably lead the world in production and distribution of goods. But culturally and spiritually we have become a nation of CONSUMERS rather than CREATORS and the practise of BUYING our artistic and spiritual experiences ready made and mass produced constantly saps our creative vigor and potentialities until we are in grave danger of becoming the richest, the best fed morons the world has ever seen. Our pioneer past made a greater contribution to the common wealth of living than we do today. The American Dream had more substance 150 years ago than now, both as a source of inspiration for the national life of the people and guiding light for the world. As an individual the pioneer, thrown upon his own resources by the absence of commercialized "culture", strove to supply his own needs. His music, songs, folk-tales and crafts were less than perfect by professional standards, but they were genuine and honest contributions. His loyalty to principles and to his fellow-men was an unwritten law without legalistic loopholes and commanded his obedience. He laid the foundation for a free society; not only free from restraints, but free for personalized activity. The world was brightened because of the advent of the infant nation; but so far the man has failed to redeem the promises of an auspicious beginning. We can make tanks, planes and atomic bombs, but the world is crying for vision and spiritual leadership.

The defect is as basic as it is wide-spread. We cannot guide the world into paths of righteousness, loyalty to principles, concern for the welfare of others because we have rejected such fundamentals in favor of unabashed, irresponsible self-interest in politics, education, religion and community life. We are choosing mediocre leadership in every field because such leadership implies no serious criticism of our own unethical and characterless conduct. Mediocracy is that form of government in which the majority determines the nature and extent of intellectual and spiritual progress.

Being Americans we cannot, as a foreigner can, shrug our shoulders with a caustic remark and look elsewhere for leadership. This is our America and our failure and we must learn to live with both. There is nothing we can do except go back to our knitting. Go back to the principles and the way of life which made America the hope of the world. All is not lost. The Midas touch has turned much of our heritage to lifeless gold; but much is still a living reality in the hearts of American men and women. That is our only hope, but it is strong enough to save us if we are faithful.

The Golden Touch of creative personality is still the answer. Let us stop buying our artistic, cultural and spiritual experiences and begin to shape them out of the stuff

of our own lives. Create them and share them. Give them freely in order that we may save our own humanity. Every person a creator, adding his contribution to the common wealth of living. For high artistry special gifts and talents are needed, but hidden talents are found in every hamlet in the land. There is a wealth of genuine enjoyment waiting to be reaped from the efforts of non-professional musicians, actors, dancers, creators of beauty in weaving, embroidery, wood-carving and kindred crafts; and perhaps greater than these: poets, thinkers and the creators of rich human fellowship in every-day living. Always remembering that the enjoyment of these values is second in importance to their creation. Because of our lack of sympathetic encouragement, only a fraction of this rich treasure is ever uncovered. Because of our unwillingness to give time and work to the development, so much remains crude and unfinished.

As for these media of creation—the potter's "clay"—that, as always remains the choice of the individual. It may be the way the daily task is done; it may be the free-time practice of arts and crafts; or it may be a spiritual activity having to do with ideals and attitudes or human relationships in the community or among the nations. There is a clay for every living person, and his happiness and usefulness wait for the discovery. It's not the size but the quality. However, true creativity in whatever field has one characteristic: it must be an out-going activity; any thought of attracting profits, honor or any other individual advantage automatically cancels out its effectiveness. (And let us show the good taste, never to barter such creations for money-raising purposes!)

This creative activity has never been taken seriously in our American community. In the shadow of the much more "important" business of making a living, a fortune, or climbing the social ladder, it has languished as hobbies, avocations or pastimes; viewed with mild interest or tolerant condescension it has been firmly put in its place as an amusing but rather useless pursuit for idlers. And so it will remain for some time to come. But if mankind ever makes up its mind to become what it obviously was meant to be: intelligently human, then the day will come in some more or less remote future when the mere business of making a livelihood will be a part-time activity quickly despatched to make way for the really important function of creative living.

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Symposium At Christmas

HOLGER M. ANDERSEN.

When I was a youngster, preparing myself for confirmation, I was confronted with, what to me was, a very provoking question. I found myself wondering why it was that Christmas had come about in the manner that it did. Especially, why it had happened at the particular time that it did. To my mind at that time it seemed obvious that the present was a more acceptable time than the actual time of His birth.

I don't believe the question was ever answered to my own satisfaction, but the very fact of the question reveals that subconsciously I had come to a realization that the world was in need of a Saviour.

There is no doubt in my mind but what the time was "ripe" when Christ was born. In "King Lear.., Shakespeare reveals the same realization when he writes:

"If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,
it will come,
humanity must perforce prey on itself,
like monsters of the deep!"

The situation has not changed much. Many are still looking and praying for divine intervention, as the only thing that can possibly save man from total fratricidal destruction. Human ingenuity in toying with the secrets of the universe have filled us with apprehension about the future. "The hopes and fears of all the years—are met in Thee tonight." Christmas is not just the observance of the anniversary of the birth of Christ,—it is the continuous expression, throughout the ages, of mankind's deepest need,—salvation. We do not just need Him,—now and then,—we need Him constantly.

It is small wonder, when we consider the inconsistent history of men, that Shakespeare should feel that life was

"a tale, told by an idiot;
full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing,"

because many times the sound and fury of mortal men has been confused with progress. We have talked of improvement, when like the petty thief who improved himself so he would no longer be a thief but an embezzler, we have only managed to become more proficient at the same sinfulness.

The great need for a Saviour arises today out of that very predicament. Our technological advances have been too great for our moral and spiritual development. In the final analysis, when we are confronted with the real meaning of life, we are "babes in the woods". Modern man's relationship to life, and his comprehension of it has been compared to the ridiculous, not to say ludicrous, picture of an idiot studying a university catalogue. It is crammed from cover to cover with marvelous possibilities and opportunities which are potentially his—but which mean absolutely nothing to him. The gap between his mentality and the fulfillment of the promise contained in the catalogue is beyond his power to bridge. His mental powers must be radically improved before any of the content can become his.

There is a tremendous gap between our notion of progress and the fulfillment of The Promise. All of the great possibilities of life that have been revealed are far beyond our limited spiritual mentality. Our spiritual and moral standards must be radically improved before the richness of the good life will be unfolded for us.

It is surprising, and at the same time disheartening, to discover how many of our people today fail to see the connection between Christmas and the obvious lack of balance in moral and technological development; for whom Christmas is an historical event unrelated to the problems of our age.

Christmas presents an opportunity. Below the surface of the commercial superficialities of modern civilization's interpretation of Christmas there lies a magic word. It is the "Open Sesame" which unlocks the untold blessings of life.—"Unto you is born this day, in the City of David—a Savior, which is Christ The Lord."

In the book of Revelations, John describes a vision which he had seen. He saw the door of Heaven open, and looking in, he saw God sitting on a throne. There was a heavenly light shining all about Him, — and the angels were gathered round Him. In His hand, God held a book, written within and without, but closed and sealed with seven seals. And an angel with a great voice shouted loudly for all to hear, "Who is worthy to open the book and break the seal?" There was none among the angels, nor upon earth who answered. John wept—because he knew that the book contained something that was of great significance for himself and for the people. Then another angel came to him and said, "Do not weep John, for behold, the lion of the stock of Judah, of the shoot of David, is victorious. He alone can open the book and break the seal."

There is no one among the angels, nor among men who is able to open the book for us. Life will continue on the same level spiritually and morally because we have not been able to find the magic word which will open it for us. There is due cause for weeping, because we know that life is good and that it was intended for a higher purpose than that for which it has been used.

It has been a long time since men ceased to believe in angels. We readily discount all accounts in scriptures in which such celestial creatures are suggested, as figments of imaginative energy. God is Spirit, — and spirit is not divisible into concrete angelic forms. But Christmas, somehow, is different—the Angels play an important part in bringing the good news of a Saviour to men.—I do believe I heard one tonight, and it said to me, "Do not weep, for behold, the lion of the stock of Judah, of the shoot of David, is victorious—He alone can open the book." He is the magic word—Christ. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

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Study of History as the Basis of Education

The aim of education is to create a better world, through developing better citizens. In the past, we have thought that the best way to do this was by maintaining the existing social institutions. So our history has been written to justify our local and national philosophy. Thus our national outlook has been confined by the neglect of the study of history in our schools to the extent that we are unable to be citizens of the world.

Fifty years ago, European traders introduced a new type of grain to a few isolated tribes in Africa. Today, the legends of these tribes tell that in the beginning of time their local deity gave his chosen worshippers this blessing. Politically we cling to beliefs which are as erroneous and absurd. A man is civilized and can understand himself and the society in which he lives in proportion to his ac-

curate understanding of himself and his fellow human beings. Mathematics shows what man does, but history must tell why he does it. History unites all knowledge into a meaningful unit. If we know what man has accomplished, how and why he did it, then we may proceed to a higher level of development.

We have all the knowledge necessary to make this a better world for every citizen, but various obstacles prevent us from using this knowledge for our own benefit. There is a great fund of scientific knowledge with which to operate, but we must create a new attitude of mind to cope with new social problems. In this world war it has been shown that oceans and space are no longer a protection, but rather avenues of invasion. If we are to have a civilized world and avoid another holocaust, we must by a study of history rid ourselves of prejudice and cultivate an open mind on the relationship of man to man. Opening of man's mind socially is a very difficult task, but we have almost completed another task that at one time seemed as impossible.

Three centuries ago scientific progress was completely hemmed in by prejudice. Galileo was imprisoned for differing with Aristotle and Moses and the teachings of the theologians. Descartes was forced to destroy his book, *ON THE WORLD*, for fear of the same punishment. For three hundred years we have waged a war of intellectual freedom to study and explain natural phenomena.

The early scientists were opposed by church, school, government and business. Now the use of our discoveries and inventions for the good of mankind is opposed by the same groups supporting vested interest. If every student knew of the struggles for scientific progress against ignorance, tradition, prejudice, the attitude of this country and of every other country would change toward every other country.

We are at the beginning of an era of the study of social science. We are making feeble beginnings in the study of man, his natural equipment, his relations to his fellow man in the light of his origin and the history of the race, but are limited by more powerful forces than those which limited the study of the natural sciences. Human beings are the most complicated of natural beings and so their affairs are the most complicated. A new method of study must be developed, for we cannot study human beings in the relatively simple environment of the laboratory, but rather must record what they have done and try to understand it bit by bit. This cannot be accomplished today or tomorrow, but we can, by the study of history, create a critical and open mindedness which will tolerate new ideas to fit new knowledge.

We are fond of formulating a philosophy and teaching those facts which support that philosophy and discarding those which conflict with it. We cannot make use of scientific discoveries as long as we refuse to present all the facts and do not force our people to take all the facts into consideration before forming a philosophy.

In order to make the discoveries that enable us to have the conveniences of this modern age, it was necessary to discard practically all the consecrated notions of the world held by the wisest and best men. Before we can benefit from a study of history we must approach it with the attitude that man in the past has made mistakes and

that we must profit by his failures rather than make the same mistakes on a larger scale. In transportation we can see the absurdity of using our knowledge of natural laws to make bigger and bigger sailing vessels. Instead to meet the new demands we have developed new types of ships. The knowledge of the success and failure of the sailing vessel made possible the building of the steam boat. Boat-makers were forced to new solutions of man's problems and could not afford to ignore any fact or set of facts developed by science simply because they did not fit in with his picture of a ship with sails.

So our study of history must cease to be a justification of past national and international mistakes. We must include all the facts to meet the problems of our age. Thus we cannot allow Germany to believe in racial superiority when our biologists have proved the theory absurd, nor can we allow Japan to enslave and rule countries when we believe in equal rights for all men. When we know how to produce food for all, we cannot allow starvation.

We have produced things, but we have not opened minds. Aristotle's treatises on astrology, physics, and chemical processes have long been discarded but his politics and ethics are still revered. The progress of mankind in the scientific knowledge and regulation of human affairs has remained almost stationary for over two thousand years.

History can shed a great deal of light on our present predicament and lack of progress. If historical facts were generally known and allowed to influence our daily thought the world would become very different. We could no longer delude ourselves as we do, nor could we take advantage of the ignorance of others.

As long as we teach only the parts of history which please us, use it to rationalize and perpetuate our mistakes we cannot truly educate our children. As long as we withhold the truth about our past mistakes in the conduct of human affairs, just that long will we use the discoveries of our scientists to destroy ourselves.

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The Vanguard American in 1946

When we launched *The Vanguard American*, we decided to send it out free for a year; then either discontinue its publication or make it a co-operative undertaking by inviting old and new friends to subscribe. Three months ago the response already seemed to warrant continued publication, so we announced the change which will go into effect January 1. Subscriptions received in the meantime will be good until January, 1947. If you have not subscribed, or otherwise indicated your desire to receive *The Vanguard*, it may continue to come for some time, but your name will eventually be removed from our lists. If you know someone who might be interested in the paper, please send us name and address, and they will receive a 6 months free trial subscription. The regular price is \$1.50 pr. year.

Our January issue has been turned over to the School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Ala. We expect an in-

teresting account of the philosophy and methods of that unique institution. Complete impressions of similar undertakings are planned for the year. Our circle of new acquaintances is constantly enlarging, and we hope to bring many interesting articles on the life and thought of the American people.

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For Meditation

Dr. HOWARD THURMAN

Fellowship Church of All Peoples

Pride and arrogance are always with us seeking to exert their pernicious influence in what we say and how we say it; in what we do, and how we do it. No one of us escapes. Very often we find ourselves most completely influenced by them when we are surest that we are most self-effacing and humble. For their subtlest pose is that of humility and an apparent willingness to be considered the least of all. Pride causes one to exaggerate one's significance or one's insignificance either by claiming for one's self more than one knows to be true or by claiming for one's self less than one knows to be true. It makes for fundamental dishonesty because it is just as false to underestimate one's self quite consciously as it is to overestimate one's self. Again, pride makes it difficult for one to see one's faults. The badge of pride is self-righteousness. The mood that makes a person sure that he is always right, that his judgment is always sound, that he never stands in genuine error,—this it is that eats like cancer on the soul and character of the man on righteousness bent.

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Creative Teaching

With all our scientific teaching methods and material, our educational system seems to be overlooking the most effective means for imparting knowledge and for activating the child's natural curiosity about its environment: the power of the spoken word. Even if the school's primary task is considered to be the imparting of knowledge and developing skills,—and this might be seriously questioned,—the effectiveness of the spoken word would still rate highly when used by teachers who have sufficient personality and imagination to penetrate the child's normal indifference to purely technical subjects without having to resort to such questionable methods as appeals to the vanity and competitive instinct of the child. But with respect to such subjects as history, literature, geography and social studies where it is of tantamount importance that the information is **ABSORBED** by the child, dynamic, living speech is the only effective medium.

In order that the student may reap the real benefit of these studies, so that they become a part of his emotional and mental life, and retained by the memory with

the vividness of actual experiences, he must become **CONTEMPORARY** with these historical or imaginary events. He must become an observer on the spot of the geographical setting of man's dwelling-places and the conditions and fortunes of his living. In other words, the object of education in these subjects should be to make the student a **PARTICIPANT** in these events and conditions; and only creative, human speech is able to reconstruct them and make them vivid and real with the impact of first-hand experience. As such experiences they become part of his personally absorbed knowledge and can be drawn upon later in life to formulate judgment and principles; that is, add to the student's accumulation of wisdom.

It has long been a source of uneasy astonishment to educators that graduates of high-schools and colleges emerge from so many years of study with so little actual knowledge of historical facts and such hazy conception of their meaning. Names and events are often confused, sometimes in the most ridiculous manner. The reason is perhaps that the graduate must rely entirely on the purely mechanical retentiveness of his memory. He cannot call upon his subconscious memory of vivid and unforgettable impressions to supplement and vitalize the formal data of his courses because he has received no such impressions through his education; and even such data as he has more or less laboriously accumulated escapes rapidly from his mental grasp, because it has in no way entered into an organic unity with his life.

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Hospital

ELLEN NIELSEN

BUT I COULD REFUSE TO GO she thought suddenly staring at the smartly fitted overnight bag upon the bed.

Tooth-brush, tooth-paste, my own soap, she counted, and again the thought came, **I COULD REFUSE TO GO.**

The black satin mules first, she cautioned herself, then the pajamas folded like this. Those pajamas had right from the start made her think of peacocks. Perhaps for a hospital they were not quite—? **NO ONE CAN MAKE ME GO!**

Held by the thought, startled, she stood for a moment with the white bathrobe folded over her arm.

Couldn't she just—give it all up? Definite arrangements had not really been made. The hospital would not remember. In the clinic she had been No. 178500. A number more or less could not make any difference to them. They had not been insistent. They had been quite casual. She had only been one of the many shadows she had passed in the silent corridors. They had exchanged furtive, probing glances, measuring one another's fright, comparing bodies. Never once had they brushed against one another by so much as a breath in the long echoing corridors. It had been like walking a tight rope. Shadows walking tight-ropes.

A wave of the old nausea swept over her. Those bare signs jutting out from the row of closed doors: **METABOLISM, EYE, EAR, NOSE, GASTRO-INTESTINAL.** Like weary obscenities chalked painstakingly on freight cars. And the **X RAY** sign, a distinct skeleton, had singled her

out and she had had to take her collection of parts into its swathed and secret darkness.

The nausea crept to her throat. I COULD REFUSE TO GO BACK she thought again and the thought was like a sly hand cuddling her. But her hands all by themselves were shaking out her bathrobe busily and folding it neatly into the bag.

Hadn't they let her go this morning? They had let her go the way dreams let one go. Their voices had spoken from a dream too, without violence, out of a huge soundlessness. Arrows of words lodging suddenly with a delicate preciseness just below her throat where the nausea lived.

"We cannot come to a definite conclusion, Miss Wilson. We would like to have you come in for a few days of observation and further specific examinations. Would it be possible for you to return this afternoon?"

And without a second's hesitation, tranced, she had seen the words coming out of her mouth like the pictures of ectoplasm coming from the mouth of a medium, "Why yes, I think I can arrange to be here."

The doctor had nodded from behind his white wall. "I'll leave instructions at the Admittance and when you come you go directly to the desk, at the left of the lobby, and arrange about your room."

That was all. It was over as dreams are suddenly, indefinitely over. No signing. No stressing or promising.

She had escaped slyly, warily, into the elevator. Father had been waiting in the lobby. His kindly, anxious eyes had almost wakened her from the dream. His lips had moved, "Well dear?" But she had not stopped. She must not waken yet. How clever she had been! She had swept him with her through the revolving doors, down the driveway to the car.

"They want me back," she had said looking apprehensively over her shoulder and had seen then the last shreds of the dream dissolve like a mist.

No, she would not have to go back. There had been no face at one of the many windows, no opening of a door for a last reminder. They had let her go. She had wakened from her sticky, cloying dream. She was standing by the car. She was standing here in her own room packing.

The moisture on her forehead and upper lip turned cold and distinct. She felt tears blur her. I WILL BRING MYSELF BACK she cried to her trembling body and fell weeping on the bed. There's nothing to do. I'll bring myself back.

"Your gloves, dear," said her mother as her father picked up the bag. "I'll be down this evening. You mustn't worry. They'll soon have you well and strong again."

"Come now, mother," she had begged suddenly out of a primitive need, and her mother, without surprise, had come. She felt as though she had taken a decisive step with those words, admitted defeat or gained a victory. She could not know.

Sitting between her mother and father in the car she had felt like a little girl again. A frightened, ailing child. It was like living over again her first recognition of her parents in some dim beginning of being. MOTHER and FATHER she said and the consciousness of her body that had harried her for so long ebbed away like rings in water. I am not anything anymore. I am not aware. Just a child

saying mother and father. Once she tried tentatively MAMA and PAPA. She could have slept. The first time in weeks, really sleep. If I could just fall asleep here, now, I would be well again. We wouldn't need to go on to the hospital. We could save a lot of money she would suggest slyly to her father. I could finish your dress for you, mother. But the hospital already lay spread before them with its many windows. She remembered the corridors, the ghostly signs GASTRO-INTESTINAL. METABOLISM.

"Oh I'm so tired of my body!" she cried beseeching her mother and father.

Her father walked on ahead carrying her bag. "You wouldn't want to go on and on not being well?" he called back over his shoulder.

"It's so indecent looking at oneself," she whimpered. Her mother kept patting her arm.

In the lobby she sat apathetically in a great soft chair. "You arrange everything, father. Anything, anyplace. I don't care. Don't ask me anything. Just let someone come and take me where I'm to go."

Her mother drew up a chair beside her. She saw her patting her arm again but she could not feel it. There were other people sitting in the lobby but she could not distinguish them. I am simply tired she thought. The nausea was rising again. She could feel the cold perspiration pricking her lip. She did not try to battle with it anymore. Just let it roll over her, engulf her, obliterate her.

Someone in a uniform picked up her bag. Her mother prodded her, said they must go with him while her father finished at the desk. They waited for an elevator. Her mother kept talking but no sound came to her. She did not exert herself to listen. We are waiting for an elevator she thought. Now it has come. Now we are in it.

The grating of the doors closing, the metallic catch of the doors made a pleasant sound. Closed. Opened. They left the elevator. They walked down a corridor slashed with light from open doors. She was half aware of people passing them. It was like the indistinct, blurred rush of fences and telephone poles from a train window.

They had come into a room as empty and vacant of feeling as herself. The uniform had gone. Her mother was unpacking her bag. Someone came in and said she was to undress at once and go right to bed. The voice came out of a well of whiteness. Nurse, she told herself.

She undressed in the strange daylight. Her mother held out her pajamas. Peacocks. On the bed lay the crass impersonal hospital shirt. Outside the windows the useless, turbulent sound of the world beat against the walls of the hospital and sank back like waves from a shore. She had a fleeting premonition of having been removed from an intolerable confusion of willfulness to a world of discipline where curiously she herself would be inviolate. And dropping the last bit of her clothing to the floor it was as though she had shed some strange, hampering duality of herself, something that had tortured and confused her. Turning, naked, from her mother she picked up the strange unlovely garment from the bed, thrust her arms through the sleeves and tied the tape at the back of her neck.

"Emblem of citizenship," she said tremulously, and climbing into the high flat bed with a shuddering sigh of surrender pulled the cold sheets over her.

Quaker Meeting

I would like to give you a glimpse of a meeting held by the "Friends Society" in Indiana this last October. Every fifth year Quakers from all over America gather for a conference to conduct their business and receive inspiration for their daily lives. I quote from a letter received from my sister-in-law after she had attended this meeting. I think it would benefit us to know these people, who call themselves Friends inspire each other to live useful Christian lives.

MARI STØTTRUP.

THE LETTER

"... I left my room before eight, some days before breakfast, and went to the wonderful meetings at the great Friends House in East Richmond. The anticipated 500 delegates multiplied to 1000-plus and I knew at least half of them. A portion of each day was devoted to business affairs of the society—many of them deeply religious sessions at that. Much of the time was spent in large or small meetings, wrestling with spiritual or social issues that perplex mankind today. I am not sure whether my greatest inspiration came from the various meetings that took most of our waking hours, or from meeting again with friends who in years gone by had become much more than casual friends because we had worked together and grown very close.

"There were great men and women there—the greatest being those whose lives were so deeply centered and balanced that they could weep with the sufferers of this world, who could with clear vision face without evasion the tasks that must be the work of professing Christians, who could laugh whole-heartedly and joyfully at the side-splitting tales of Rufus Jones and Levi T. Pennington and others, who could speak simply and out of great humility of spirit in meetings for worship. I sensed no smugness or spiritual conceit. There was an almost living and tangible search for guidance. There was a conviction that much must be done, that the way ahead was not clear for many steps, but that as each step is taken the next emerges if we are willing to be led. The pious confidence that here was a great people whose job it is to save the world—an attitude that too often makes for smugness and self-righteousness and crowds out true humility of spirit, I did not find. Instead I had the feeling that here was a small group of dedicated men and women appalled at their smallness in the face of what waits to be done, but who could not escape their responsibilities and who profoundly wanted divine guidance. Such religion is a joyful, releasing thing and makes people serene WITHIN, even as they are twisted and pulled and torn by outer circumstances.

"To be with them in conference, in worship and in visiting was much more than a pleasure. How we did visit! Every hour between meets was used to see people — one woman whom I consider a truly great woman had three

of us come to her hotel room for breakfast, one a minister from California, one a peace-worker from Washington, D. C., and I as we had run out of meal times to be together with those we wanted to have time to talk with. She is a housewife who has raised four children, and been a leader in church and community activities always, has a wonderful sense of humor, is highly intelligent. A British friend was there under a deep sense of concern for the kind of work—and workers—that might go to Germany, a country in which she has long had special interest. And incidentally she is one of the world's best story tellers! Almost everyone there there was 'some one special,' to be seen and talked with at all costs! Well, I could go on a long while about everything, but will not.

My body I discovered had been beaten and wilted when I left—a thing not noticed until then—but the spirit soared. The inspiration will last long. My one regret was that Daniel could not be there."

Mrs. ELIZABETH MARSH JENSEN.

This issue of the Vanguard has been delayed due to the transportation strike and resulting paper shortage.

One Year

A year ago we sent out the first Vanguard American to a number of people we thought might be interested in the search for new trails, or, perhaps, old trails that had been forgotten. For the editors it has been a good year. Not in the sense that the project proved especially popular or successful. There were some surprises, happy and otherwise. We are deeply grateful to the people who have given their encouragement and support.

If our search has not proved sensationally successful, it has, none the less, proved desperately necessary. With all the feverish attempts to stabilize our world on the slippery incline of compromise and bargaining,—in which no one really has much faith,—we have failed to find the foothold which might arrest the dangerous slide which threatens to carry us over yet another precipice. Prompted by wishful thinking, we have tried to believe our American political system, way of life and standard of living so potent and desirable that the rest of the world would flock to our spiritual shores, gratefully embrace our principles (has anybody seen our principles?—they were here a minute ago!) and live happily ever after.

Our optimism was unfounded. The world is not prostrate at our feet in worshipful admiration of our utopian political and social institutions. Our suspicions of recent years, that all was not well with us; that, perhaps, we had sold some of our American idealism down the river of opportunism, now appears to be well founded, being very generally shared by the rest of the world.

All this we knew, of course; nationally we have of late been subjected to a morbid attack of self-criticism. What we didn't realize, though, was the extent and the quality of the deep, hidden veins of idealism in the American peo-

ple; the truly poetic depth and vitality of the American Dream: the Fountain of Youth which keeps the heart of the people throbbing with a living faith in fundamental principles and urging them on to new visions. Drowned out by the surface noises of the rush for position and privileges and the breathless pursuit of anesthetic amusement, the deeper veins glide murmuringly on to the point where they will surface to become the fountain-head of the stream of America's historic life, to lave again the arid desert of a sterile national existence.

So for us it has been a good year, because we have heard more distinctly the murmuring of the Deeper Veins. It sends us on to 1946.

Another realization which has become increasingly clear to us in the course of the year is, that the only thing that can help us now is the redemption of the individual. A countless number of schemes for curing the ills of the world has been tried and found ineffective, because the ultimate success of any scheme depends on the attitude and quality of the individuals acting under it. The mere excellence of the plan is not enough. Anyone will admit, I believe, that given the will to co-operate, to be especially concerned about the other fellow's problems, would make the task of organizing the classes and the nations for harmonious social living a very simple one; in fact, almost any plan would do, because its weaknesses and defects would be remedied by individual sense of responsibility; just as the good elements in any plan could be sabotaged and made inoperative by the will to turn them to individual advantage. We have treated the symptoms: wars, social, political and racial injustice, mal-distribution and crime without noticeable success, because we have not touched the disease causing them all: individual self-interest. On the contrary, any number of reforms have been motivated by renewed appeals to it. It is only reasonable to expect, that an organization whose members have been incited to seek rights and privileges for themselves will eventually die of its own poison.

That may look as an over-simplification and will be branded as such by those who are expending vast efforts to have their otherwise excellent plans accepted, but two world wars in rapid succession and a humanity criss-crossed by "fronts" at every conceivable angle increasing the hatred and belligerency among factions, should convince us that with all our plans and organization for this or that remedy, we are only increasing the irritations and defensive attitudes among the people; irritations that more and more frequently flare into active hostility and further the break-down of a universally co-operative spirit. In fact, it matters little whether we are for or against an injustice as long as we approach the problem in a spirit of pugnacious belligerency; the loss will constantly outrun the gain.

The fact that whatever degree of success we may have in our effort to overcome the ills that beset humanity depends entirely on the spirit in which they are undertaken does simplify the whole matter, because in that case we have only one task: that of developing the type of personality which alone is able to make whatever plans we may formulate workable. Admittedly, it is also the hard way; but probably not so hard as to be impossible. As I pointed out in a previous article, the problem is not that

of changing human nature, but of redeeming it from domination by the flesh. We are not accomplishing that with our constant grouping in belligerent factions, each group battling all the rest to establish its particular formula for utopia. We have fought two wars to establish democracy in the world, and the world is less democratic now than when we started,—even the U.S.A. What, then, have we gained? Any moral victory is in nature bound to be followed by a period of spiritual growth and stability coupled with a deep sense of wholeness; so, judging by the years that followed World War I, what we accomplished by this armed crusade for high principles must have been a crushing moral defeat. Or the years that followed the Civil War.—And God only knows what the coming post-war period has in store for us. There are many omens, and they are all bad!

Isn't it possible that our ideas about "fighting for principles" are all wrong? Else, why are the fruits so bitter? I don't think we have the slightest chance of changing the principle of physical, political or economic force as the basis of whatever nations desire to establish as right or desirable; at least not until we, individually, have the sense to reject it as a means of imposing our plans and principles on our more or less unwilling fellow-citizens. A few more military victories and the human race will about be finished,—especially if won by the "good nations." A military victory is less destructive when won by a "criminal" nation than when won by a righteous one. When the righteous man loses his moral integrity,—as he will when he resorts to violence, the loss is complete all around.

The idea that moral principles must be fought for—literally—is entirely erroneous. On the contrary, to fight for them, with physical or non-physical violence, spells certain defeat. We might as well make up our minds now before it is too late, that anything which can be gained by fighting is not worth having. True freedom, for example, is never attained by fighting for it. It is an attribute of the personality, a state of being; it cannot be given and it cannot be taken away by a second party. It is something a man IS, not something he HAS. Mere physical or political freedom is of no essential value; all the less if the politically free are bound heart and hand by bigotry, intolerance and short-sightedness.

Except in defense of physical existence—and even that has been rejected by great moral personalities—there is nothing left to fight for, because all threats against the personality come from within. We are defeated by our own dishonesty and unprincipled depravity, but never by that of others. A man is not only his own worst enemy, he is his only enemy. It is not what the individual suffers at the hands of his fellow-men that harms him, but the hatred and vindictiveness generated in his own soul. To fight for our rights may seem to us a noble and righteous thing, but it must be remembered that in establishing our rights by force we are in grave danger of losing something more valuable: a sympathetic relationship with our fellow-men. If we must fight, let it be for the rights of others; then we are less apt to confuse rights with personal ambitions.

With best wishes for the New Year.

DORA and HOLGER J. KOCH.