The revival of personality

BY ERNEST HIRAM LINDLEY

I WISH to take for my text a quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson who about seventy-five years ago said, "Things are in the saddle, and they ride mankind." And yet, within a very little while following that utterance he declared, "But the lightning which explodes and fashions planets is in him. On the one side elemental order, sandstone and granite (and he might have added, machines), and on the other part, thought, the spirit which composes and recomposes nature. Here they are, side by side, God and Devil, king and conspirator... riding peacefully together in the eye and brain of every man."

A little while ago I rescued from the attic a book bearing a magical title. It is of every man. "Things are in the saddle, and they ride mankind." And yet, within a very little while following that utterance he declared, "But the lightning which explodes and fashions planets is in him. On the one side elemental order, sandstone and granite (and he might have added, machines), and on the other part, thought, the spirit which composes and recomposes nature. Here they are, side by side, God and Devil, king and conspirator... riding peacefully together in the eye and brain of every man."

A little while ago I rescued from the attic a book bearing a magical title. It happened to be a holiday edition. It was bound in silk and when I saw it again after the lapse of years I mourned the decedence and dilapidation of that silk binding. And then when I recalled the title and the author of a book who dominated the thought of men and women like yourselves thirty-five or forty years ago, I said, "The binding is in better condition than the book and the author." The title of the book was Heroes and Hero Worship, and the author was Thomas Carlyle.

Do you know of any undergraduates nowadays making pious pilgrimages to Craigenputtock, that lonely farm in Scotland, the scene of some of the most creative activities of one of the greatest spirits of his time?

Do you know of anybody except specialists in the study of English Literature of that particular period who now as we used to, go down to Chelsea, to sit by the old fireplace where Carlyle and Tennyson smoked and talked.

The author of a great biography of a great poet said, "I am no hero worshipper." Today Carlyle and his poet, prophet, priest and king—what of them?—their mouths are stopped with dust. And in the opinion of some philosophers, the machines have overtaken us and ground us into paste. And yet, the yearning for the freedom of the individual is inextinguishable.

Even prior to the war, men were making the machine the scapegoat. Our industrial civilization was to blame for the "lost individual" and for "submerged personality." And when the machine was not blamed, our philosophy of nature was the culprit. There was and is a philosophy of nature, of mechanism, based on the rigid old atomistic physics that held if you cannot divide an atom, then you have got something pretty rigid, all the way through, even including the composition of men's minds.

According to this view, laws of nature are rigid and immutable and man is merely a part of nature. And so the mechanistic physics dominated our thought and finally broke through into the realm of the mental and social sciences. And as a result, in psychology we have behaviorism—the reduction of everything that happens in a man, and to a man, and by a man, in terms of the secretion of his salivary glands, and the like. And a very important contribution to the objective study of human life it is.

Mechanism everywhere. A little while ago a friend remarked, "I have just read Jeans' new book on The Universe About Us. Our universe is now discovered to be so vast that it takes 200,000,000 years for the light traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second, to pass from one extremity of this universe to the other. In a universe like that, what does an individual amount to?"

A man standing near said, "That is a very interesting calculation of Mr. Jeans'. But I would like to inquire, who invented the yardstick?"

Is there any evidence that men, in the cosmic drift just float into some sort of ether that gives them calculus? And the power to measure and to create machines that multiply their powers? Yet Bertrand Russell, a somewhat gloomy philosopher has said that there is a conceivability, a perfectly valid system of measurement that would prove that a man, a given man, was as large as the earth.

One man's brain—Einstein's for instance—does not build a very large in terms of the earth—indeed it is some billions of times smaller than the earth—and yet, men like Einstein across the centuries, have modified the character of this old earth considerably.

Napoleon, you remember, when the general returned with a defeat instead of a victory asked, "Why this defeat?" And the general answered, "The circumstances were against us." You remember what Napoleon said. "Circumstances? Napoleon creates circumstances."

And in these utterances of Emerson, and of Napoleon, and of this yearning of men for something else than a mere sharing in the life of animate and inanimate nature we have the most significant factor in our day, the revival of faith in the importance of individuals.

When the Great War came, this irresistible, this instinctive, wishful thinking of our race again asserted itself. You know how we all turned to the great man to lead us out of the wilderness, the man on horseback in that particular case, and he, failing to appear promptly, we turned to the great inventor, Edison. We would have him invent some way by which he could wipe out the enemy over night. And across the years, those terrible years of war, when the great man did not come, and the visualization of these huge masses of men, millions and millions, came to the consciousness, there was a hopelessness that any human mind could span and master and direct those armies to victory.

That disappointment was acute. But note—there would not be disappointment unless there was hope. Hope never springs out of what has already happened. A machine may treasure in itself the shocks and stresses and strains. Steel has a molecular memory like that, but no hope, no picture of anything better.

And here was this inextinguishable hope of men that the great man would come; that some dominant personality would lead us out. And when the great military leader came, leading our forces to victory there was a revival of faith in men. But this was followed by the Versailles Conference, and the Treaty. In view of the nature of that Treaty some men became despondent.

Men like Philip Gibbs said, "The idealism of the world is dead. We are crushed by materialism on masses of men." Mr Chase said, referring to machines, "We have a billion wild horses. Nobody has lassoed them; nobody has trained them."

Then a marvelous thing happened. A young man flew alone across the Atlantic and arrived in Paris, and all over the world men threw back their shoulders and looked at the sky as though they had done it themselves.

What was the miracle of the response to Lindbergh's flight? Not mere satis... (TURN TO PAGE 369, PLEASE)
There isthe instinctive thirst of hu-
marty. And it is the thirst that can be ade-
ately quenched in Christ, and
Christ alone.

THE REVIVAL OF PERSONALITY

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faction in the achievement of youth, but a victory of a human spirit, of human personality and daring over Nature. It was celebrated around the world as a victory for personality.

And there is Mussolini. Italy, deso-
lated by the war, poverty-stricken, drift- ing, responded to the call of a man who knew where he was going. David Starr Jordan once said, "The world gets out of the way of a man who knows where he is going." And I am informed that Italy is a new Italy. Clean, industrious, wealthy, proud of itself and of what they call their manifest destiny. Because one masterful personality stepped into the breach.

And over in Czechoslovakia a little while ago they celebrated the birthday of their president, Marxarik. And they think in Czechoslovakia that their new life as a nation today is due to one person, under the fire of whose inspiration their souls, conflicting and warring, have melted and flowed together into a new unity of national life.

Then just at this period came the flood of new biographies. Why be interested in biography if man does not count? Strachey led the way with his *Queen Victoria*, a critical realistic picture of a woman who ruled Britain for sixty years. Critical! He painted in the wrinkles where they were.

Then came the flood of less signifi-
cant biographies, less critical, some of them sensational, many fictional, many of them frankly debunking, and they had a curious effect. First of all, people read them. And as a result, we have a new hero worship. We have re-
discovered our great men.

George Washington can stand scrutiny, but the trouble with the Washing-
ton that you and I knew was that he was a steel engraving. Pastor Weems, and the early biographers had embedded the hatchet story so thoroughly into the tradition of Washington that every lit-
tle boy who wished to be like Washington read that story of the paragon who could not tell a lie—this little modern wholesome boy, who wanted to be as good as he could under all the circum-
stances, to whom a lie might be "an abomination in the sight of the Lord, but a very present help in trouble."—this little boy was in despair at Weem's counsel of perfection. He could not worship a steel engraving, an impossibly perfect boy. But here come the biog-
raphers, stripping away all these encr-
ustations of legend and letting us know what sort of man Washington ac-
tually was. And somehow he was flesh and blood and no harder done to his es-
sential greatness. Mr Coolidge said, you remember, when a certain critical bi-
ography of Washington was called to his attention, as he looked out of his window at the White House, toward the Wash-
ington Monument, "I see the monument still stands."

Great men can stand scrutiny, and there is a contagion through contact with them if we can see them in the flesh. And therefore one of the great services of these fictional biographies, some designed to belittle the great man, had precisely the effect of magnifying the leaders of our race. So today there is a revival of personality and a new hope.

Some personalities indeed are in Hol-
lwood: twelve million people a day go to see certain of these so-called person-
alties on the film, on the level of a cer-
ton. There is a contagion, through contact with them if we can see them in the workaday world as now.

Mr Stuart Chase has spoken of leisure, and I don't need to remind you that foremost, the hours of leisure are the golden opportunity for the enrichment of personal life. That is true even of students. Outside the class room, what happens between five p. m. and eight o'clock the next morning, is quite as important as anything that happens in the school room.

What of the university in all this?

Twenty five years span the chief pe-
riod of the attempt to measure human ability and human achievement, and methods of teaching, and the like. This movement is of incalculable value to edu-
cation. But no discriminating person has for a moment believed that these measurements were mass measurements for the sake of mass judgments; rather these measurements are to enable one to better understand the individual and deal with him more intensively and in-
telligently. Such studies re-emphasize the transcendent importance of individu-
als.

Now what of higher education? Re-
leased from a good many bondages of the old physics, mechanistic and be-
havioristic trends, it is turning unmis-
takably to the intensive cultivation of the individual as never before. The Oxford plan, the honor courses, program, a host of other devices, and included, orienta-
tion, separate housing even where the Oxford plan in its completeness cannot be carried out—all of these are responses to the democratic conception, the new conception of leadership and of individuality.

Furthermore, the old aristocratic theory of leadership was that we have a very few voices and all the rest are echoes—just a few sulphides and all the rest of us bromides. A few universal geniuses,--Caesar, Napoleon, Washington,—and all the rest of us, followers.

Today we have the conception of specialized leadership. In the intricate life, social, industrial, commercial, that with its specialization of fields of activity, with more than 13,000 ways in which men may more or less honestly earn a living, the opportunity for leader-
ship is as multiple as, not merely these vocations, but as the kinds of excellence that men find effective within these various fields, for their own lives and for the lives of others.

In studies of leadership made years ago by Terman he found that in a group of four or six children doing a certain sort of task would be one leader, and he would find leaders in other groups. He would shuffle those leaders and in the new circumstances and with the new task you have a new leadership. Con-
tagination of example. And out of it grew

the view that everybody has influence in some respect, and that somehow every-
body must find an opportunity to lead and have unique success. And the qual-
ities of great leadership carry with them the ability to follow faithfully and loy-
ally those who excel in other lines. A
great leader is always a great follower.

The university cannot define personal-
ity completely as yet. It is as elusive as the odor of grapes and yet we know through historic practice and the like that under certain conditions individual-
ity and personality flourish.

There is no great development of per-
sonal life without rich personal life of teachers in the teaching—no other way but in the Incarnation—personality as reflected in the schoolroom or in the extra-curricular contacts of the student.

Today another great movement, that I must mention before closing, is the com-
prehension, the attempt to weave in-
invited her to write for that newspaper, she accepted.

So great was the success of her column that she was soon engaged to write for all Scripps-Howard newspapers—where it is read daily by thousands of men and women throughout the country. With the new freedom for which she used to campaign won, Mrs Ferguson has turned her attention to the manner in which woman has adapted herself to the new conditions and to the problems involved in the association of men and women.

\[\text{STUDENT LIFE IN ZURICH (continued from page 355)}\]

men who are more or less serious about their work, for they come to the university to study more than to train themselves to live well; if they do both it's so much the better. But they fall down on one side as much as the Americans do on the other. My impression has been that the Europeans are better students, but poorer men. I don't think at all they are more intelligent than intelligent Americans, their book worms any wormier, or their Philistines any less Philistine. In fact it's as hard to get some one among the students to go to one of Schiller's plays here as it is to one of Shakespeare's at home. I have tried it and have had to go alone many a time.

\[\text{BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE (continued from page 352)}\]

"I felt that the growth of the university would continue after my time. I remember certain people proposed a plan to pave the road directly back of the Administration building. I did not want to do this because I felt that some day the space there would be needed and used for beautiful buildings. Someday someone would build real buildings on the campus, not the little bungalows I had been building. Your beautiful library now stands where the paved street might have been."

"Many of the old landmarks have disappeared. Buildings which stand in their place are worthy of a fine institution. By the way, where is that old gymnasium? I always meant to tear the old thing down, but never got to it."

"During the war when the Student Army Training Corps was stationed on the campus, regulations were very strict. A student sentry refused to let me pass a certain section. I argued with him but he was determined that I was not to pass to see one of the officers. Finally he said 'who are you? Aren't you just one of the fellows helping around here?'"