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*Havelock Ellis*

MY CONFESSIONAL, by Havelock Ellis.  
\$2.50. 5½ x 8¾; 239 pp. Boston: *The Houghton Mifflin Company*.

For years Mr. Ellis has been receiving letters from admirers in all parts of the world, requesting his advice on all sorts of problems, strictly personal and otherwise. The present book, which consists of seventy-one brief chapters, is built upon the points raised in these letters, and Mr. Ellis discusses each point, "if not in the directly personal way in which I have actually written to my correspondent, at all events in its essentially impersonal point." In this manner he manages to say something about "many of the chief questions of our day." His philosophical survey of the contemporary world takes in very nearly everything: sex, eugenics, sentiment, con-ism, the proletariat, war, French art, Goethe's meaning for 1934, the discipline of pain, Bolshevism, George Sand, Tolstoy, "The Place of Art in Life," "The Riddle of the Universe," Spinoza, criminology, music, "The Problem of Leisure," and "What is Happiness?"

They who have read Mr. Ellis's previous non-scientific writings, especially "Affirmations" and the three volumes of "Impressions and Comments," will not find much that is really new in the present book; but novices might well buy it, for it forms a really excellent introduction to the ideas and style of one of the most influential men of our age. My own first encounter with the man's body of thought was in 1923, when "The Dance of Life" was pub-

lished. It seemed that everybody in the United States was reading it and being impressed by its "clarity, profundity, and wisdom." I read the book very carefully, and found it singularly vague, irrelevant, and unilluminating. Then—spurred on by one critic's exuberant claim that Ellis was "undoubtedly the most civilized Englishman of his generation"—I read most of his other books, and a large number of his articles. The man grew on me, as the saying goes. I could feel only the highest respect for one who had the courage, insight, learning, and industry to produce the monumental six volume series of "Studies in the Psychology of Sex" in the dark years 1897-1910. I also liked "The Nationalization of Health," "A Study of British Genius," and "The Task of Social Hygiene." But his other books, especially the aforementioned "Affirmations," "Impressions and Comments," and "The Dance of Life" left me dissatisfied. I was puzzled, because these were the very books which were read the most widely and praised the most highly, and by people who at the time had reputations for discrimination.

Now that I have read his latest book I am more convinced than ever that Mr. Ellis is one of those unfortunate men who have written the most about the subjects they are least competent to discuss, and who have been praised extravagantly for the wrong things. He is first and foremost a physician and psychologist, specializing in the history and treatment of sex problems, and he had said all he had to say in 1910, when the last volume of his "Studies in the Psychology of Sex" appeared.

All his books since then have been either repetitions of ideas first stated in this series, or, what has been far more frequent, collections of immature and hollow ideas expressed in suave but distressingly lifeless prose. I do not wish to belittle his really great contributions to the science of sex. I only wish to place him more accurately in the realm of general thought. In short, he is a great scientist but a third-rate philosopher. Some of his meditations, in fact, come perilously close to the meditations of Arthur Brisbane and Walter Lippmann. Here are some of them, culled from the present volume:

1. May it not often be that the views we advocate today were the views we had no faith in on some long forgotten yesterday?

2. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

3. Today war is not only degraded but unnecessary; . . . If we fail to take the next obvious step of setting up an international police force to meet the risks of nations murdering each other, we meet the fate we deserve, for our civilization not only stultifies itself but grows stagnant and corrupt.

4. Sentiment is itself a substantial part of the reality of life.

5. Our vision is so often clouded by emotion.

6. It may easily be seen that, even at the present rate, before many years have passed there will not be a single proletarian left in England. Or, if there is, he will be placed in the Zoölogical Gardens or otherwise carefully tended. And in the United States he will probably have disappeared at an earlier date.

7. Death and Pain are essential elements of Life, absolutely necessary for human development.

8. The art of love is still so rare.

9. A nation is infinitely more difficult to organize than a domestic home.

10. Marriage in this respect at all events resembles swimming, in that it is not easy to learn it on a table. It is only by plunging into the waters of marriage or of the sea

that one can learn to swim in either element.

11. Rebellion and aspiration on one side: thankful resignation, if not contentment, on the other side. The two attitudes seem complementary. They are both needed to make the complete Man. A strange creature, no doubt.

Surely there is not much light and leading in such observations. It has been said of Ellis that he "belongs in the line of Goethe," that he is full of "godless mysticism," that he is an analyst, a synthesist, and a universalist. Is he all of these things? Is he any one of these things? I have grave doubts. His wisdom consists largely of kindly expressed banalities, such as I have quoted, and his analysis of world affairs is almost wholly made up of well-intentioned ignorance. He who says that the proletariat will soon disappear from England and the United States doesn't know what he is talking about. If there is one thing on which all economists agree, it is that the proletariat all over the world is increasing, through the subjection of the middle classes. And what supernal insight is there in the remark that war will not be abolished until the world organizes an international police force? This is Sunday-school prattle. Nowhere in all his books does Mr. Ellis show that he fully understands how wars come about, how strong the economic element is, and how foolish it is to speak of the brotherhood of nations before economic rivalries are disposed of.

The world owes a great deal to Mr. Ellis for helping free the basic functions of the human body and mind from the shackles of ecclesiasticism and savage morality, but that does not give him the right to assume so Olympian an attitude toward the struggles of all of us to obtain the modicum of physical comfort, without which all the

fine writing about Love and the Dance is so much guff. "To see the World as Beauty," says Mr. Ellis, "is the whole End of Living." But how can the world seem beautiful to a hungry man as he looks helplessly upon his starving and bedraggled wife and children?

In the every-day world of struggling for one's daily bread and butter, as I have tried to show, Mr. Ellis is completely lost. He is also lost in the realm of the arts, which is somewhat strange, for he has spent many years of his long life in the study of literature, painting, music, and dancing. He was one of the original sponsors of nudism, which every honest physician and psychologist knows is a quackery. And he has praised lavishly such dubious people as Samuel D. Schmalhausen, Count Keyserling, Ortega y Gasset, Nicholas Berdyaeff, James Hinton, Benedetto Croce, and Benjamin de Casseres. He says of Mr. de Casseres that he is "a critic who has known how to win the approval of fine judges outside as well as inside his own country. . . . He has produced what may well be the most eloquent rhapsody ever sung around Spinoza." And of the abstruse and hollow Croce he says that he "is still one of our most luminous and wide-visioned thinkers." Count Keyserling was long ago exposed as an unintelligible mystic, and his books are sneered at by intelligent people for the frauds which they are, but Mr. Ellis devotes a whole chapter to his trashy "South American Meditations," and without reservation places him in "the tribe of the prophets."

No one can doubt that Mr. Ellis will live long in the memory of mankind for his heroic championship of sense, decency, and beauty in sexual matters. For that he deserves our deep and abiding respect, perhaps as much as does Sigmund Freud. But let us not dim his real glory by prais-

ing him for something he is not. He is not a philosopher, in the large and immemorial sense of that honorable word. He is a great medical and psychological scientist. That God did not also make him a philosopher is no reason why his admirers should.

CHARLES ANGOFF

### *Young Professional Man*

CITY EDITOR, by Stanley Walker. \$3. 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ ; 336 pp. New York: The Frederick A. Stokes Company.

STANLEY WALKER is a happy young man, utterly delighted with himself and his job. Seven years as city editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* and he is ripe to purr in public of the many joys of sitting on top of the New York situation; of sending his skilled men out to bring back for him the color of a mighty city. Quite self-consciously he fulfills his rôle; his book reveals him not only as a city editor but as a city editor who knows he's a city editor and glories in it; as much at home in the job as if it were all a play and he a good actor. He knows what a city editor ought to be, too, and here he leans back and with the precision of a Walter Huston in a film tells everybody just what he's doing and why.

There's no nonsense about the man, either. He has more things neatly ticketed than a Fundamentalist preacher in his own home town of Lampasas, Texas. He knows what he knows. He knows that women, by and large, make lousy newspaper men. He knows that a newspaper reporter ought to have a good education, with a heavy grounding in the sciences because science is so important these days. He knows that the editorial page is passing out, and that editorials ought to be confined to giving facts and background supplementing the news stories. He knows