

It's Your Own Fault

By John B. Watson

Would you like to change your personality? It can be done, but you must do it yourself—face readers, bump measurers, hair testers and handwriting experts won't help you. Whatever you are, it's your own fault—so behaviorists say

THERE are no human instincts! What the human does he has to learn to do. That which we call personality is a product of our environments, our habits. We behaviorists find nothing mysterious in this distinction of character called personality. The layman appears to regard personality as some vague, indefinable human attribute born in the human mechanism.

But the behaviorist's studies of the infant convince him that all normal human beings come into the world with about the same equipment and that this equipment is very simple and very inadequate. We find little in inheritance to make one healthy child start out differently from another healthy child.

As the human young passes from infancy to adulthood it becomes organized in a thousand different ways. Different systems of activity develop. A child at three may exercise himself with tearing the limbs from insects, pulling worms apart (why he starts this may depend upon a thousand factors—children deprived of meat often, even at this early age, actually kill and eat insects and worms).

At 15 he may be assistant to a butcher and learn to cut up meat. At 20 he may enter college and become an excellent student of physiology, becoming adept in vivisectional experiments.

Later he goes into medicine and becomes an expert surgeon. Here we trace an activity trend from three years of age onward. A cross section of this individual's activity at any age beyond three would show the thread of organization later to appear as *surgery*.

Let us take another case—this time in the emotional realm—and it must be remembered that emotional behavior is learned like any other behavior. The only boy of a mother gets petted, loved and kissed to excess. At two the father dies. The mother makes an inseparable companion of the boy. She takes him to sleep in her room and finally into the same bed. The boy is tender and courteous to all women. He is sensitive and shy and retiring. His mother keeps him from associating with girls of his own age and puts obstacles in the way of his marrying—threatening suicide even.

She puts great stress upon manners, dress, formality of behavior. At every moment the mother is doing something which will have influence in shaping this child's personality. What she does will have continuous influence all through his life.

Suppose we look upon the organization that begins at birth and ends with death as an ever-widening stream of behavior.

If we take a cross section of this stream at one year, we will find the beginnings of many patterns of behavior—vocational and emotional.

At four years a cross section will show those same patterns, only grown more complex, and some new patterns; at 14 the same patterns and still additional

ones; at 30 the same and still some new ones.

But, alas, beyond this point further elaborations of old patterns rarely take place and still more rarely do new patterns form! There is no reason for this untimely death of variations in personality at this comparatively tender age except for the fact that most people have become too well fed to learn.

We learn about an individual's personality by studying him in action. We make an informal inventory of that person's behavior patterns. We do it for strangers much better and much more accurately than for friends with whom we have grown up.

We do not do it scientifically. We don't need to. Our rough working judgments are sufficient guides to admit a given person to our social group or to deny him admission.

As laymen we rarely judge the personality of others objectively, but always on the basis of our own slants. A man of the world meets a highly estimable business man who is religious. This one bit of organization damns the chap in the eyes of the man of the world.

The early psychoanalysts claimed that, being completely analyzed, they had no beams in their own eyes, hence they alone could make objective, unprejudiced judgments about personality. Many present-day analysts realize they are not made gods by analysis.

Mental Tests Were Oversold

Psychology has made progress in the study of personality during the past 25 years, although not nearly so much progress as certain mental testers would have us believe.

Mental testing for business purposes especially has been oversold. Twenty years ago Münsterberg began overselling. For him psychology was destined

to solve all of the personnel problems of the manufacturer. A few years later mental tests were touted as a genuine scientific instrument for measuring the caliber of individuals.

Thousands of standardized tests are in existence. School progress is graded by them. Students are admitted into college, salesmen are selected, normal children separated from substandard ones, feeble-minded ones picked out, bright children lifted out of the herd—all by the use of tests.

The behaviorists do not quarrel with tests. They quarrel with the exaggeration of their importance in the hands of certain schools: for example, those of Terman and of Thorndike.

They are good as far as they go. But they are not "mental" tests or "intelligence" tests. Nor are they the whole of psychology or even a large part of it.

In the first place they tell us nothing of the special vocational abilities of the individual tested. They tell us little of his manual equipment—what he can do with his hands, legs, body.

The testers themselves admit this. To offset it they have devised many so-called special-performance tests.

Unfortunately there are many vocations in life in which no form of testing is applicable. Who would attempt to pick out by any form of general intelligence or special-performance tests a good business executive, a good newspaper man, an advertising man, a good department-store buyer, literary material of the first order?

My general point of view on psychological tests is that while they may help us to separate the sheep from the goats, they do not tell us much about the flock of sheep.

It seems to be the general experience of business executives that men and women fail in their jobs not from lack of intelligence but because of faulty emotional organization.

The emotional part of our equipment is just as important as the manual and the verbal. So far no mental test has been devised which will tell whether a man is a liar; whether he has the guts to stick to his job in the face of considerable problems; whether he is a persistent worker or a clock watcher and a washroom loiterer; whether he is able to work in cooperation with others.

I gather something—not a great deal—in my first personal interview with an applicant for employment. I can observe whether his nails are clean; his

face washed; whether his linen is both frayed and dirty; whether his clothes are unpressed; whether his shoes are shined; whether he has any command of the English language.

There is an impression going the rounds that an applicant should be able to look you in the eye. Some employment managers try to bore into the applicant with their own eyes to see whether the poor fellow can stand up to it. This is just an old wives' tale. I wouldn't want him to look *me* "squarely in the eye" any longer or any oftener than good manners call for. In brief, what you can learn from one interview is very meager. It is always better to have several interviews.

The College Man Lasts Longer

Executives today are scrutinizing carefully the educational charts of the applicant for worth-while jobs. Did the applicant finish his grade school or did he drop out at 12 or 14 years of age where the great mass of our young Americans drop out? Did he finish his high school and his college work?

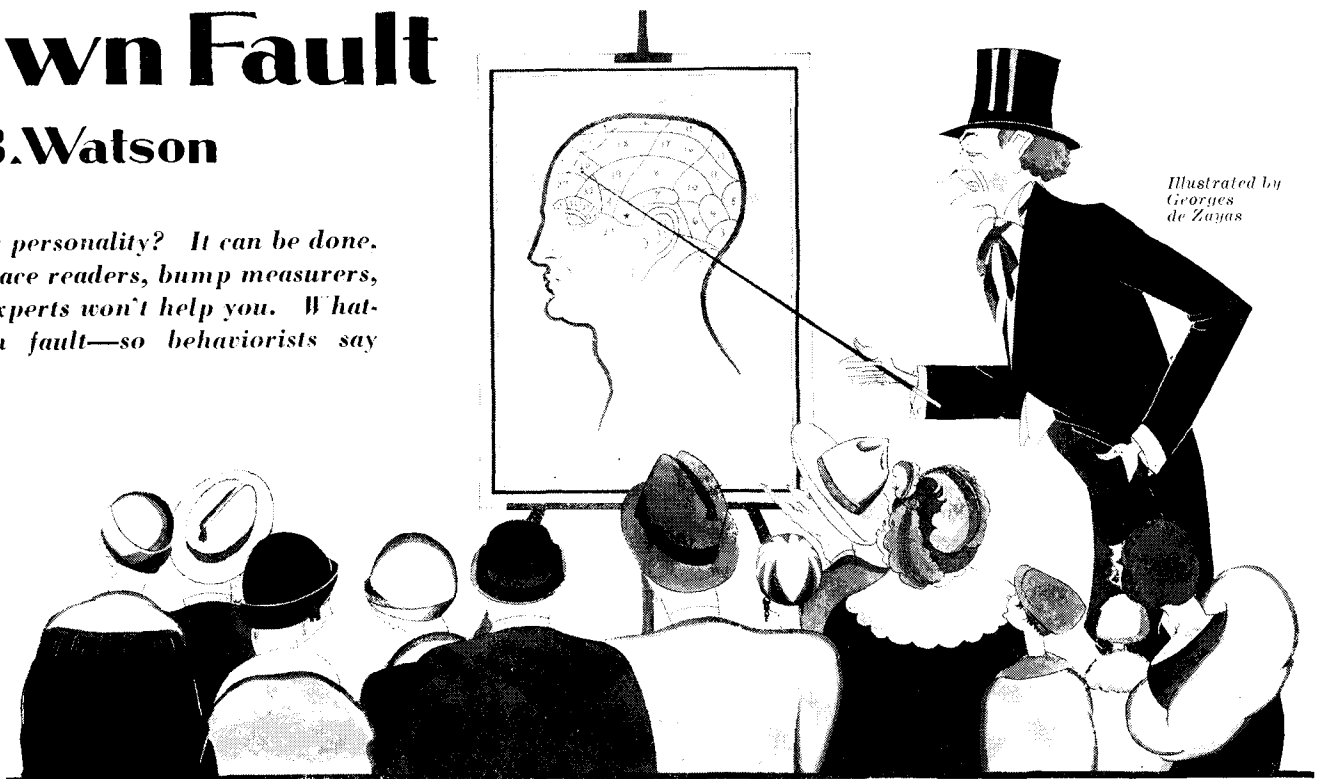
Naturally, he doesn't have to be a college graduate in order to be a good man. But if he started college and dropped out at the end of one or two years, I certainly want to discover whether it was absolutely necessary.

In spite of the numerous exceptions to the rule, the college-bred man does seem to last longer in business and to get along in business better than the non-college graduate.

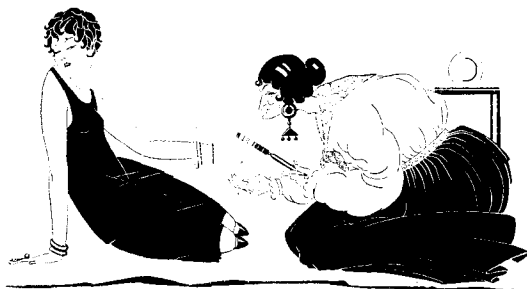
The next thing the behaviorist looks at in this common-sense way is the length of time the applicant stayed in each of his various positions and the yearly increases he received in earnings. The man who has had ten jobs between 20 and 30 is a floater. He will probably go on drifting until he is 60. Then he joins the army of dependents.

On the other hand, if he has remained in an inferior position for too long a stretch of time, I begin to suspect him of being lazy, of being fearful of new responsibilities, of not having thrown off his nest habits.

I like to chart informally the sports and spare-time record of applicants. I believe that a study of this record is quite revealing. We know that outdoor activity leads to physical fitness, to keenness in competition, to steadiness in coordination. We know too that a man who can (Continued on page 34)



Another head hunter, the phrenologist, gets there fast: he charts bumps but not brains



Her roseate future lay in grand opera

The Shepherd of

The Story Thus Far:

THE Forrests and Lundeens have always been enemies. The Lundeens, formerly very poor, are now very rich, Mr. Lundeen having by various crooked methods succeeded in acquiring the Forrest wealth and home, Cottonwoods.

Young Clifton Forrest, back very ill from the war, and Virginia Lundeen, not at all in sympathy with her father, are fast falling in love though they do not admit it to each other.

Virginia's father is determined to have her marry Malpass, a half-breed, who has control of Mr. Lundeen's property. She refuses. Later she finds that Malpass is responsible for a fire which destroys Cliff's store and its new stock. She also finds that Malpass is determined to marry her or will ruin her father.

She decides that the only way out is to marry Cliff and to save her he readily agrees, and they are secretly married, both being happier about it than they will admit. They separate immediately after the ceremony but their secret comes out when Cliff gets into a fight with Malpass and Malpass taunts him with his coming marriage with Virginia. Cliff's father turns him out because of the marriage and Virginia's father turns her out.

On the day on which this fight occurs Virginia and her cowboys inspect the so-called silver mine from which her father and Malpass have made so much money, and they find no trace of silver. What they do find seems to be gold planted there. Virginia swears the cowboys to secrecy until she does some more investigating.

Her father having told her to get out, Virginia goes to visit Ethel, having first sent her cowboys to another range with her horses. While visiting Ethel she engages a mining engineer to investigate the mine.

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EARLY in November Virginia returned to Las Vegas and took up her abode at the Castanedo. She had been so engrossed in her project to investigate the Padre Mine that she quite forgot circumstances likely to accrue when she arrived. It was a small town, and in half an hour everybody apparently had heard of her return. When she had answered the telephone a dozen or more times she realized that she had achieved a popularity that was almost notorious.

"Well, this is the limit," she said, resignedly, as she sat down by the window. "I ought to have let Ethel come with me. Where was my head, anyhow?"

When she answered the telephone the next time she heard a familiar gruff voice that made her jump with surprise.

"Hello! Is this you, Virginia?"

"Yes. Who's speaking, please?"

"Lundeen," came the answer.

"Who?"

"Your father. . . . Don't you know my voice?"

"Oh—Father! Excuse me. I didn't credit my ears. How are you?"

"Not any too damn' good," he growled.

"I always knew you weren't. . . . How is Mother? Have you heard from Mother lately?"

"Yes. An' I heah she's some better."

"That's good. I'm very glad. She was always in better health in Atlanta."

"An' how're you, Virginia?"

This was an amazing prelude to something, Virginia reasoned, and it sent a tingle over her.

"Me? Oh, I'm fine. Thank you for inquiring."

"Reckon I'll run down to see you," he replied.

"You needn't. I wouldn't see you if I bumped into you on the street."

"Ahuh! Waal, I sort of had a hunch you wouldn't. So I called you up."

"Pray, why should I?" inquired Virginia, with faint sarcasm.

"Virginia, I'm shore sorry about it all."

"Indeed. What a pity! But it's too late."

"Lass, I'm not gettin' any younger. An' Mother's gone. She'll never come back. I've a hunch I'll never see her again. An' I'm sort of lonely."

"But you have your slick Señor Malpass," returned Virginia, cruelly.

She heard him curse under his breath. "Virginia, I'll take you back if you'll divorce Forrest."

"Divorce Clifton!" she cried, as if amazed. "I couldn't think of that. How can you ask?"

"But you don't care for him!" expostulated Lundeen.

"Why, Daddy darling, I just worship Clifton," rejoined Virginia, tantalizingly.

"My Gawd! An' I've lived to heah a Lundeen say that!"

After a long pause Virginia continued: "Well, is there any more I can tell you? I'm very busy."

"Hold on. . . . Virginia, aren't you hard up for money?"

"Indeed I am. But don't let it worry you."

"Waal, it does worry me. You never knew the value of money. You'll be borrowing from the hotel, or the taxi drivers—anybody."

"Oh, so you think anybody would lend me money?"

"Shore. I reckon you'd be good at the bank for what you wanted. But I don't like the idea, Virginia."

"So you want to save your face by sending me some?"

"Waal, if you put it that way."

"Dad, I'd starve before I'd take two bits from you. Presently I'll get a job here. Oh, I can do most anything from stenography to millinery. I might borrow some money and start a millinery store. But, if I'm not so much as I think I am, I could at least be a waitress. Reckon I'd be an attraction at the Harvey lunch-room here. Or—"

"Shut up. I'd buy the place an' close it. Do you think I'd stand for a Lundeen—"

"Listen, Papa," interrupted Virginia, sweetly. "You forget I'm no longer a Lundeen. . . . I'm registered here at the hotel as Mrs. Clifton Forrest."

Crash! He had slammed up the receiver. Virginia fell away from her end of the line breathless, excited and exultant.

"That'll do him for a spell. . . . Poor Dad—ready to crawl! If I can get anything on Malpass—Oh! what can't I hope for?"

VIRGINIA unpacked and then went out walking down to the business section of town where she met Richard Fenton, who happened to be coming out of the bank.

"Howdy, Dick," she said, brightly.

"Virginia!—Well, of all people!" he exclaimed, in delight. "Wherever did you come from?"

"Denver; I got in this morning. Hadn't you heard? I might as well have had a brass band."

"No, I hadn't. But I'm sure glad. Say, Virginia, you just look wonderful."

"Thanks. It's the air. I looked like the devil in Denver."

"Impossible. You've been with Ethel. How is she?"

"Fine. Announced her engagement. Nice little chap."

"You don't say. Ethel! Well, that accounts. She certainly had something up her sleeve. . . . Where are you bound for, may I ask?"

"Back to the hotel."

"Suppose you have lunch with me there?"

"Thanks. It'll be jolly. You can tell me all the news. . . . But, Dick, hold on, I forgot. I'm a respectable married woman."

"By gosh! I forgot, too. Mrs. Clifton Forrest. . . . That lucky son-of-a-gun! But do you know, Virginia, as I

couldn't have you myself, I was glad Clifton was the man? None of us could stomach Malpass. And believe me we were all scared stiff. We were afraid if Malpass didn't get you, some one of those Eastern galoots would. Clifton is Western and the real goods."

"Dick, I like you for that speech," returned Virginia, warmly. "Come, I'll take you to lunch."

IT WAS only a step round the corner to the Castanedo, where Virginia presently found herself in the well-filled dining-room, sitting with Richard, and not unaware of the interest she aroused.

"So you didn't go to Reno?" queried Fenton, with good humor, though he was curious.

"Reno! Why there, for goodness' sake? Denver is bad enough."

"It was rumored you went to Reno to divorce Clifton. Pretty generally believed, Virginia."

"Well, there's absolutely no truth in it. I suppose I have Father and Malpass to thank for that gossip. As if there weren't scandal enough!"

"Personally I didn't believe it," went on Fenton, after he had given the waitress an order. "Your friends were ready to gamble that if you married Clifton, even to get rid of Malpass, you'd stick to him."

"Dick, did they roast me for it?"

"I don't think so. Sure, no one ever did to your friends. You've had us guessing though. Spoiled the romance by leaving Clifton behind."

"Did I? . . . Dick, I'm ashamed to ask

"No. I didn't see Clifton that day."

"Then there was neither an elopement nor a divorce. . . . Virginia, I fear the tongues will begin to wag again."

"Let them wag. I'll give them some more to wag about, presently. . . . Dick, do you think I'll be able to borrow some money?"

"From me? I should smile. How much do you want?"

"Child, not from you. But the bank. You're supposed to work there."

"Well, I imagine you could knock down any reasonable sum."

"I haven't any security. Of course I have my jewelry, Dick. I had to pawn some diamonds in Denver. Ethel was furious. But I couldn't touch her."

"You can touch Father all right, even if he is a hard-headed banker. He always had a soft spot for you. Shall I ask him, Virginia?"

"Yes, if you'll be so good. I don't need any money right now, but I will soon. . . . Dick, I'm afraid I never valued my friends."

"Better late than never," he rejoined lightly; and then, after a more general conversation, they finished lunch and parted.

She entered the lobby and a bell boy accosted her.

"Call for you, madam."

"Telephone?"

"No. There's a man here who says his business is too important to be phoned or told to bell boys."

"Indeed. Where is he?"

"He's waitin' inside. I'll call him."

In a moment he returned escorting an



Jarvis stared in consternation. Malpass, releasing Virginia, whirled like a wolf at bay, reaching a hand into his hip pocket

you. Do you know anything about Clifton? Where he is—how he is?"

"Virginia, don't you know?" queried Fenton in surprise.

"I—I—haven't the least idea," replied Virginia, her voice trembling a little.

"By George! The story went that Clifton got fired out of his home the same day you got yours. He disappeared. Naturally we all thought you had it planned to meet somewhere."

awkward rough-garbed man who bowed to her, embarrassed but earnest, and said: "Are you Mrs. Clifton Forrest?"

"Yes," replied Virginia, annoyed that she blushed.

"My name is Smith. I'm a sheepman. Today I was in San Luis an' I had a talk with Don Lopez. An' jest now I happened to hear you was in the hotel. So I made bold to ask for you. I reckon I've somethin' interestin' to tell you, if you can spare a minute."