

AMERICA'S FEAR COMPLEX

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

AT the bottom of all the problems of civilization, — race questions, religious questions, political and economic controversies, — lies the fear-complex. The man who tyrannizes over another does so, primarily, because he fears that other. What we need in America is a wholesale "treatment" for the eradication of our fear-complexes. Science, in this matter, is coming to the aid of religion; for science, by diminishing the realms of the unknown and by revealing a benign universe, is exorcising this demon.

WHATEVER may be the shortcomings of modern scientific thought, we owe to the scientists two formulations, one in the field of pure science and the other in the field of psychology, which support each other, which are in line with religious feeling and with the older wisdoms and traditions of the world, and which admit of immediate application on all sides.

The first is that conception of the atom which has been most recently elaborated. There seems to be a general agreement among physicists that the activity of the atom is at the scientific bottom of all things and controls all things both physical and metaphysical. We ourselves are a product of this atomic activity. The dynamic force of the atom passes through animate and inanimate nature, and unites thought with whatever is beyond thought in one continuous stream of natural power which directs both the conscious and unconscious portions of our being. If the question be raised, What shall be a man's personal relation toward the atom? one must answer that he must accept it; he cannot fight it or control it or side-track it in the smallest degree. He is obliged to "let what will take all."

To fear the universe is to oppose oneself to its operations. To accept the universe is to allow it to work its will through our submission, and thus to become an assisting portion of its purposes, whatever they may be. We are thus forced to adopt that philosophic attitude of mind which used to be called Determinism. This state of mind is well known to all the older religions and is the basis of many of them.

The second formulation, for which no modern man can be sufficiently grateful, has been contributed by contemporary psychologists, and consists in the discovery and the naming of the Fear-Complex. The truth of this second theory is correlative to that of

the first-named theory; or to put the matter simply, if the first be true the second must be true. If the atom knows its business we must trust it or perish; to fear it or stand in dread of any of its workings is just so much suicide.

The Fear-Complex of the psychologists was immediately accepted by thinkers of all kinds. It has gone abroad into medicine, and into every form of therapeutics, whether physical, mental, or moral. It combines magically with the innumerable observations of spiritual and religious truth that date from ancient and from modern times. Many of our bodily ills can be traced to the congealments of fear, and all of them are somewhat alleviated by the banishment of fear. I must note incidentally that the banishment of fear gives us the key to the spread and success of all those forms of mental discipline which are known in America as New Thought.

Let us advert for a moment to the methods of the modern psychologist. While talking to a patient in whom he has detected the demon of fear, the scientist endeavors to exorcise that demon through a series of questions and answers that may tend to arouse courage and hope in the patient. He tries to free the patient's mind from an exaggerated sense of responsibility, and thus to liberate in the patient many powers and faculties which have been suppressed through fear. This psychologist believes in the benevolence of the universe. He is himself a fearless man, and he is aware that the operation of the atoms within his own fearless anatomy are at the moment of the interview playing upon the atoms of the patient in a continuous stream, — as they did in the old days of the cheerful family physician. I have never known a doctor who did not act upon this hypothesis.

Now the mental healer, so called, differs from the psychologist in that the healer is consciously relying on God for the influx of fresh power into the patient's mind. He too deals in questions and answers, but rather as a subsidiary resort. Moreover, the mental healers have long since gone further than the psychologists in that they have relied on metaphysical influences which are conveyed at a distance; they have relied on natural phenomena which at the time seemed to partake of the supernatural. To-day, however, the most recent conceptions of the atom, emphasizing as they do the unmitigable contiguity of all men to each other,

have thrown a flood of light on the nature of life, and have justified practises which are the commonplaces of religious thought and toward which science has been groping its way. I do still meet an occasional scientist who believes in the five senses as the only modes of communication between human beings; but such men are becoming more and more rare every day.

Let us now take a wider view of the whole subject. It is to be noticed that almost everything that is odious in human government turns out on inspection to consist in the ruling of men through their fears. All the historic tyrannies, religious persecutions, burnings, and slaughters have been done *in terrorem*, and for the purpose of subduing men through fear. The same is true of all lesser forms of oppression, — as for instance through spying, bribing, cutting off supplies, slandering, boycotting, and so forth. Such practises are not only done to arouse fear in the victim, but for the most part they represent fear in the doers themselves. For instance, the atrocities of the French Revolution were committed by men who were themselves petrified by terror. In fact, when you see a persecutor, a cruel man or a mean man or an unjust man, there is pretty sure to be an element of cowardice in him: the man is afraid of something.

If you will take a survey of the great familiar problems that now confront our civilization in America, namely the race questions, the religious questions, and the dangers due to the centralization of our business interests, you will see that every one of them depends upon the fear-complex in individuals. The unprotected individual is being crushed through his terrors. We are apt to speak of publicity as the only cure for such conditions. But publicity is the one thing that the suffering individual most dreads. Hence the dilemma, — the recurring, historic, ever-present dilemma. It would seem that the fear-complex must be cast out before the cure can walk in. This is certainly the view taken by the modern scientific psychologist, who endeavors to reassure his patient, to put heart into him, as the preliminary to putting mind into him.

The word "treatment" which is used by our New Thought people in regard to their mode of dealing with fear has never seemed to me a happy one. The path by which the sufferer's mind and spirit are approached by them seems to be rather in the

nature of prayer than of practise, and the word "treatment" would seem to be more nearly descriptive of that diabolism, the casting of spells toward an enemy (an abuse to which telepathy has always been exposed), than it is to the selfless and celestial benevolence that is common in our modern healers. But the word "prayer" would seem to be more accurate.

Nevertheless, I will borrow the phrase. If there be such a thing as "treating" a whole nation at once for the "fear complex", that is what we need in America to-day. All our business men need the treatment, all our politicians, all our writers, editors, and publishers, the children in our schools, and their mothers and fathers in their homes. The man in the street needs it, the preacher in the pulpit, the philanthropist in his sanctuary, the clerk at his desk. Every educational, political, or industrial danger that faces us is due to the prevalence of the fear complex. A general diminution of fear, though it were but relieving to a very small extent the secret timidities of each individual, would set every one of our problems on the road to a happy solution.

The phrases and terms of current philosophy change from day to day. The various streams of human thought diverge and flow separately; and we have seen that during the last hundred and fifty years there has been a gulf between the scientific and the religious preoccupations of the world. To-day all thinkers are humbly searching for a point of view, even for a passing moment, from which the implications of science and of Christian belief shall be seen to coincide. It does, I confess, seem unlikely that the formulae of science should ever convey the mysteries of human feeling or do more than leave a blank where the truths of religion will be written in, in their own language. Thus, the influx of natural power that pours into the hearts of men through Faith will probably continue to be uttered in the language of the Psalms and of the New Testament till even the scientists themselves will have come to understand them.

WHEN TWO MEN CORNERED GOLD

DON SEITZ

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IT would seem that we have developed a higher code of business ethics in the last two generations, or else the opportunities for rascality on a grand scale are considerably less plentiful than they used to be. At any rate it would be hard to find in recent financial history parallels to the bold exploits of this pair of adventurers who, having helped themselves to a railroad, proceeded to corner the nation's supply of gold,—operating with the tacit aid of persons in very close touch with the White House.

BORN in the little hamlet of Pownal, Vermont, April 1, 1835, son of a Yankee peddler and horse trader, James Fisk, Jr. soon improved upon his ancestry and gave evidence of his ability to thrive in any environment. The peddler's headquarters were shifted to Brattleboro, where James, large for his size, rode with his father on the wagon and aided in cozening coin from the reluctant hands of the Green

Mountain housewives. An innate love of the spectacular led him to join Van Amburgh's circus and menagerie, a noble show, in which Van Amburgh himself, twice daily, put his head in a pet lion's mouth, to the shivering delight of large audiences. After seven seasons with the circus, he bought the old man out, and took to the road himself. But it was no ordinary peddler cart that went the rounds,—a dingy red ark with a weary-eyed horse between the shafts and a cargo of tin pans and calico. Instead, the dazzled dames were treated to the sight of a conveyance as magnificent as a circus van, and quite as roomy, gilded and paneled in the highest style of the coachmaker's art, and drawn by four splendid steeds, whose silver-mounted harness jingled as they trotted over the hills and shone in the sunshine. The peddler was no less resplendent. He wore the latest fashions, embellished with ideas of his own, a silk hat of the shiniest sort and a flowered waistcoat of satin velvet that outdid the doublet of a king.

The wares he sold were silks, velvets, choice ribbons, and muslins dear to the female heart and difficult to procure at any price. The peddler's orders came in so fast to the new and enterprising house of Jordan, Marsh and Company, in Boston, that the firm