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SOME INTELLECTUAL WEEDS OF AMERICAN GROWTH

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In no other country or time has there been such a strange luxuriance of intellectual and social weeds as we are now and here growing on American soil. Any attempt even to sketch a historical review of them would require a volume. It seems impossible in speaking of them to avoid the use of the word crank. Our crankism is such a strange jumble of inconsistencies that there is no old word by which it may so well be named. The patient's diseases are old, it is true, but he seems to have all the old quack diseases all at once, and that makes at least a new symptom-complex. The connotations of the term crank are such that the subject is recognized as not actually or entirely insane, and yet always partially so, sometimes and in some ways perilously near, possibly really over the border line. He is also in some respects sane, or possessed of a cunning that adroitly simulates sanity. To an extent, or as regards some things, he is sincere, in one or two positively fanatical, but again he shows the previous psychologic contradiction of keeping some parts of his brain normal. His mind is evidently constructed on the water-tight compartment plan. All of this is also part of the suggested meaning of the word crank. Again, he is as to certain objects unselfish, in reference to his hobby furiously so: but there is never absent the attribute of a spider-like watching for "the main chance," a highly developed astuteness in getting money from the greater fools who trust him. He is intensely ignorant, and as inordinately egotistic, and all of that is latent in the word crank also. Lastly, "he" is often a woman, and the word must be stretched to cover that noteworthy fact.

The morbid egotism of the cranks is perhaps the most striking thing that appears in all the books, periodicals, writings, preachings, and doings of these strange people. Alienists well know how egotism rules the minds of their insane patients. Mentally diseased the cranks