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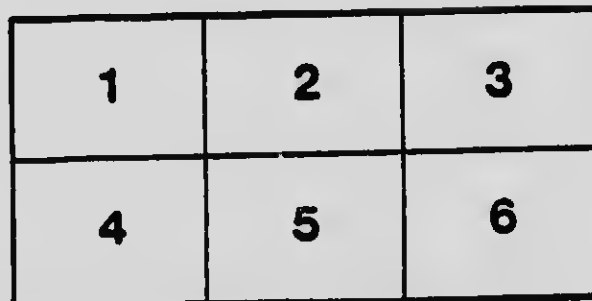
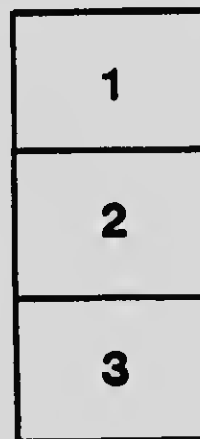
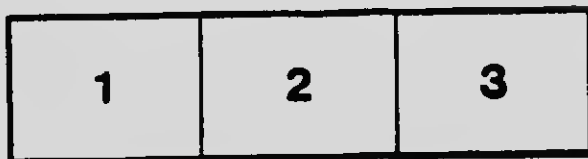
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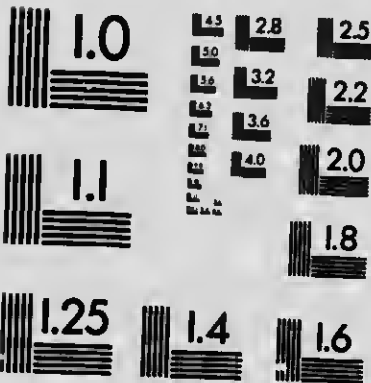
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AN APOSTLE  
OF  
PERSONAL HARMONIZING  
BY  
BLISS CARMAN

## AN APOSTLE OF PERSONAL HARMONIZING

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The first decade of our present century has been more remarkable, perhaps, for its sense of spiritual unrest and awakening than for any other one thing. Great as the advance has been in science and invention in the past fifty years, there are everywhere signs of an impending progress still greater, in the region of personal development and power. The most thoughtful contemporary writers—Maeterlinck, Maurice Hewlett, Edward Carpenter, for instance—are supremely concerned with spiritual problems, with finding the soundest basis for happiness. Their writings are inspired on every page by the deepest considerations for the welfare of man's spirit. Their thought is radical, unhampered, and splendidly sincere. They are bent only on making the world a better place to live in, by making men more in love with it and more adequately equipped to meet the tasks of life with gladness and success. No writer today can win our serious attention who does not bring us a message of hope—a light for the way.

More than that, there is in these three modern prophets, along with their concern for spiritual things, a very definite sense of the importance of physical things. They are true children of the nineteenth century in their faith in science, and in their reverence for the physical life and conduct of man, and the influence of these on his spiritual growth. Hewlett in one of his latest books says: "It is an error to suppose that discomfort is holy. Holiness is harmony. Men have lost realization of the sanctity of the body." And all of Edward Carpenter's teaching has the same trend; it emphasizes the necessity of physical fitness for the best development of mind and spirit.

Curiously enough, America has made but small contribution to this newer educational movement. You will look through the books

of our popular men of letters in vain for any such impassioned searchings for the springs of happiness, or any new word for a perplexed generation. It is here, however, in a very original form, in the work of a remarkable woman who has been teaching and lecturing for the past ten or twelve years, but in so inconspicuous a way that, while she has become an influence among teachers, her name is but little known to the general public. Let me first say something of Mrs. King herself, since the personal note, the living word, is so important a part of her creed. It is not alone by learning the truth, she would say, but by embodying it in daily practice, that we are helped and heartened.

Mary Perry King is of typical American parentage. Her father, the Hon. Albertus Perry, was of an old Puritan family from western Massachusetts, a graduate of Williams College, and at the time of his daughter's birth a prominent lawyer in New York state. Her mother was of Huguenot extraction. So that she combines the New England capacity for idealism and hard thinking with the Latin vivacity and brilliancy of temperament. While still in her teens she graduated from the Oswego Normal College, and was at once made a teacher of reading in that institution, where she had most of her former teachers in her classes. Her genius for expression had been discovered. After that she graduated from the Philadelphia College of Oratory; and still later, having mastered Bell's fundamental and epoch-making system of Visible Speech, she further perfected her voice and diction in a course of study in Paris with the French master, Shrigilla.

Good diction, a cultivated and clear enunciation, in her theory of education, is not merely an important accomplishment; it has an even greater importance as a means of developing powers of appreciation, and as a factor in general culture. Speech is one of the most primary arts, depending very intimately on physical well-being for its adequate production, and giving at the same time an immediate vent for the expression of all shades of thought and feeling. In all of Mrs. King's physical training of women, speech culture has always played a prominent part. She is herself a wonderful reader and a

fluent speaker, with a masterly command of pure English and a genius for the exact word and the happy phrase. This capacity for ready and apt verbal expression, at the command of a forceful and pervasive personality, makes her an impressive presence in a drawing room or on a platform. But any idea of her would be quite wrong which omitted her irrepressible comedy, an inexhaustible merriment of spirit, always ready to break out and play about her subject with luminous charm.

I spoke of Mrs. King's genius for the right word. She has that much rarer gift, a genius for right motion. A large part of any woman's genius is in reading character, a power we call intuition, which seems almost miraculous to the masculine mind, and is in reality an aptitude for reading motion and interpreting unconscious expression, for heeding unintentional accent and inflection—an aptitude so old and well practiced that it has become actually instinctive. This instinct for right expressive motion is pre-eminently the actor's talent; and a knowledge of all its subtleties, along with her trained knowledge of the voice, has made a large part of Mrs. King's success. It has been her lifelong study under the most distinguished authorities on the subject at home and abroad.

For several years after 1900 Mrs. King maintained a gymnasium for women in New York, where her work was carried on in her usual liberal and enthusiastic way, under conditions of sanitation and beautiful housing which, it seemed to her, the training of personality deserves. Its success was attested by the immediate gain in strength and well being of her pupils, women of all classes and occupations—women weary with social rounds who were glad to pay for their benefit, and young women overworked in their callings who were gladly given their benefit gratuitously.

Mrs. King, however, was not fully satisfied with her gymnasium. She had made use of a minimum amount of machinery, laying most stress on free gymnastics, breathing, and voice work; but she became convinced that the most useful medium of culture, for her purposes, was interpretative dancing. The gymnasium was closed, and she once



more became a student in search of further truth. A trip around the world gave her opportunity to study the women of the Orient and to see their dances in their native setting; and after her return to America she spent a year of study in adjusting her own knowledge to Western requirements. This gave her, finally, command of all the arts she thought necessary for carrying out her method of education. Since then her days have been given to teaching—in winter in New York with mixed classes and private pupils; in summer with smaller classes of teachers and advanced pupils, in the Catskills, where she has established a summer school. And, as always, a large part of her energy is devoted to mission work in her subject, with free classes for young working women, supported by voluntary contributions.

I have omitted so far to say anything of the underlying principle, or philosophy, on which all Mrs. King's work rests, and which gives it the great distinction I have claimed for it. Stated briefly, her theory of education bases itself on a trinitarian conception of human nature and human need. Man is a creature with three pronounced phases of being: the physical, the mental, and the emotional or spiritual. And yet so inseparable are these three natures, so bound and knit together in all their requirements, functions, and satisfactions, that they form not merely a triple alliance, but a true trinity. To neglect one is to injure all. And only by cultivating all in equal proportion can anything like adequate education be obtained and a symmetrical personality developed.

There have been ages when the soul of the world was bent on winning happiness through the senses, when the satisfactions of the mind and the spirit were counted as nothing. There have been ages when men were concerned with the affairs of the spirit alone, when religious ecstasy was accounted all in all, when art and sciences and material comforts were ignored, and the ascetic cared only for his impossible dream. Lastly there have been ages devoted overmuch to science, ages of skepticism, barren alike of religious ardor and refining art. All these have been partial and inadequate racial experiences. They must give place to the next great step forward in hu-

man progress, the idea of a symmetrical perfection, the realization that perfection can never be reached through renouncing or violating any one of the three essential factors in men's triune nature, but only through duly recognizing them as equal and bestowing upon them equal reverence, care, and education.

This triunistic idea is as fundamental as the idea of evolution; and it bears the same relation to education that evolution does to science. While the need of physical training is generally recognized, there is almost no realization of its coherent influence upon character building and social evolution, of its value as a fine art, and of its potentiality as a part of every liberal education. Even physical educators themselves seem seldom to have been aware of the tremendous influence they might have wielded. Their systems for the most part look no further than muscle-making; and we are still confronted with the absurd anomaly of American girls and women trained in the wooden maneuvers of German or Swedish military drill. It is only our wiser teachers, like Dr. D. A. Sergent and Mary Perry King, who have seen the wrong of such methods, and have modified foreign systems to native needs and growing ideals. In such ready soil the triunistic ideal of general education, and the realization of physical education as an art, are bearing fruit.

To quote again from Maurice Hewlett, "It is no harder for a woman to make herself a work of supreme art than for a man to paint a masterpiece or to write a classic. But she must cultivate and use her genius for self-expression. What material to work with—fine moving, breathing, speaking medium, infinitely more elastic than painter's stuff, infinitely more potent than aught inanimate, this being, warm, tinged with life, instinct with meaning, rhythmic, eloquent! You can be picture, form, poem, symphony, in one. You address the mind through every sense. Every gesture is charged, every throw can express, every word be a phrase, every look a tone, and every tone a revelation."

That is the ideal. "Ah, but how?" you may ask. What teaching can accomplish this? Personal harmonizing educates just such in-

dividual genius. It took an interested and plastic but perfectly untrained student, and in six months placed her in the front ranks of interpretative dancers in the most critical drawing rooms and studios of New York, in original dances created for her by her teacher; and a little later secured her a place in the New Theater Company. But personal harmonizing does not find its fullest scope in training dancers; that is only an instance of its special possibilities. It takes numbers of rank and file public school children, and in six months, at two lessons a week, gives them command of fine personal carriage, habitual unity of thought, feeling, and expression, through co-ordinating their motion and speech. It is showing teachers how to get prompt and perceptible improvement in the personalities of their students. And because it enlists and cares for all the powers, it gives its pupils a happy and mellow culture such as no other education has been able to secure. A method of education which not only helps men and women to go through their daily tasks with greater ease and efficiency, but enables them to put heart in all their work, to realize their own genius, and to find gladness at every turn, is what we have been looking for.

The aim of Mrs. King's work may be said in a word to be the educating of individual genius; to give people freedom of spirit by placing at their disposal a healthy body freed and attuned to the finest uses of thought and feeling. That method of education is surely best which takes cognizance of the entire personality and attempts to fit it for predestined uses. To learn to walk and move well, to breathe and speak efficiently—these are rudiments of education that have been strangely neglected. To reinstate them in their place and to relate them to symmetrical general culture, is our need. The body cannot thrive on futile and disordered exertion, nor the spirit be refreshed by silly and pointless exercise. And because the failure of the old order of physical education is being very generally felt, this new vitalizing ideal of triline culture of which I am speaking is spreading through the country like a message of reprieve.

If I understand Mrs. King's philosophy rightly, she would say that

unity, order of motion, and poise, are three main considerations in her scheme of training. To preserve and foster one's unity of being; not to be distracted nor to suffer a partial culture; not to develop the head at the expense of the heart, nor the hand at the cost of either. To be a single, united being in all our aspirations, thoughts, and actions; to be glad all over, to be intelligent all over, to be efficient through and through. This is to realize one's entire being as a unit. "Isolation of parts" is a phrase significant of much that was wrong in old-fashioned physical teaching, indeed in old-fashioned education generally. To stand immovable on one leg while performing gyrations with the other, or to swing Indian clubs while the whole body, except the arms was held rigid, might be excellent training for St. Vitus's dance, Mrs. King would say, but was ridiculous preparation for the art of daily living.

By order of motion, or sequence of procedure, is meant this: that there must be what Mrs. King calls spiritual lead in all ideal effort, in all our movements, undertakings, and actions. It is the order of nature; first, energy, wish, caring, choice; then thought, aim, direction; and lastly, realization in accomplishment. To follow this order is to secure the utmost natural economy of effort, efficiency of result, and pleasure in occupation; that is to say, the utmost beauty, helpfulness, and happiness in every personal act and in all human endeavor.

Having realized unity in ourselves, to give it habitual poise is our further task. Poise of personality involves poise of the person, an unwavering command of our bodies; and this in turn can only be maintained through muscular ability and a firm base of support. That implies unrestricting clothing and footgear—for women particularly some form of dress that shall not obstruct deep breathing nor mar the soft, free grace of the throat and neck, and broad-toed, heelless shoes that shall give an adequate footing and freedom for the moving body. It is an ideal that does not sound promising to the average woman, and certainly most dress reforms have not been altogether happy. But Mrs. King, who has given a great deal of thought to this branch of her subject, seems to have solved the mysterious difficulty in some for-

fortunate way without sacrificing anything of the grace and exquisiteness which rightly enough belong to women. I suppose it is her inherent Latin taste which enables her to be radical without being obtrusive, and essential without being eccentric. She certainly carries out her uncompromising ideals with great tact and graciousness. In her philosophy of life the most needed reforms for modern woman could hardly be called a gain, unless they could be secured without impairing her immortal dignity and charm. Like many thoughtful people, she sees that American women are in some danger of selling their birthright for a mess of pottage; and while her ardent life is given to forwarding their essential interests and upholding for them unfaltering ideals, many of the more conspicuous "women's movements" find her indifferent. She is too deep a thinker—I should like to say too full of profound racial wisdom—to be carried away by popular clamor.

This is not the least of my reasons, when I try to speak critically of her teaching, for giving her a place among modern thinkers beside the wise and serene Maeterlinck.

*Reprinted from "Good Housekeeping," for May, 1911.*

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