

Confessions of a Sun Worshiper

Stuart Chase

Some people collect postage stamps, others, old masters. I collect ultraviolet rays, preferably non-synthetic. In the city where I was reared, the institution I regard more sentimentally than any other is the L Street Bathhouse in South Boston. Here on a warm spring day nearly a score of years ago, I made my debut into the society of sun-worshippers. Passing through the old warren of a bathhouse, one emerged upon a strip of sandy beach, perhaps a hundred yards wide, flanked by high board fences that ran into the water. Along the east fence, for the sun was in the west, lay an squatted and dozed a hundred naked men, nine out of ten of them colored like South Sea Islanders—and it was only early May. Naked they did not seem, but clothed in the most just and timeless covering of homo sapiens. But how naked I felt, creeping out to lie among them, a pale white wraith in a field of bronzes. Thereupon I resolved to clothe myself aright, and from that day to this the resolution has been kept.

I came again and again to L Street. Slowly the stark white gave way to ever-deepening shades of brown. Slowly I learned the laws and dogmas of my cult. The high priest was a man named Richards. He wore a circular hat fashioned out of newspaper and nothing else. He was a teacher of music and would spend long hours enlarging on the monopolies, cabals, and high crimes of the House of Ricordi. He spoke with circumstantial precision, but without bitterness—for who lying in the sun can be bitter?—and about him sprawled a professor of England at Harvard, a policeman from Dorchester, a banker, a night-worker in a powerhouse, a famous criminal lawyer, an advertising man, a locomotive engineer, and a notorious gunman.

Interminable, drowsy conversations were always in process. We talked of law, science, government, women, crime, sports history, races—without passion, with a detached philosophy which held, I am convinced, an authentic wisdom. The sun nourished that wisdom, that all-pervading tolerance. Beating down upon us, it ironed out the taut impetuosités, the nervous, hasty judgments, the life and the bitter.

Our rules were few but strict. One never stood in a brother's sunlight. One never yelled, threw sand, or broke into conversation violently. It was mandatory to "take the water" at least once, whatever the time of year. Practical jokes of all kinds excluded one from the fellowship. As why should they not? An utterly relaxed body is in no psychological condition for practical jokes.

All winter long we came when the days were bright. If the sky was clear the wind not too sharp, it was amazing how warm one could keep in a sheltered corner. Our color ebbed a little, but never really left us. Red copper gave way to pale mahogany. On Christmas day the hardest of us had a swimming race, with shivering reporters in attendance, who served it up with all the regularity of the annual groundhoy story. We were the L Street Brownies, half man, half walrus.

Nobody had ever heard of ultraviolet in those days. Few of us arrived because of a doctor's orders—though there were doctors among us. But by and large we knew, with profundity which mocks science, that what we were doing was good for our bodies and good for our souls.

I could not explain it then, and I cannot explain it now. I have women who have loved to bathe, to lie on summer sands, to feel the sun striking into their marrows, but who have been utterly untouched by that deeper call which binds them eternally to Helios. In a way it is like a drug; a sunless month, and the world goes askew. But contrary to the laws of drugs the after-effects are never painful. (No accredited sun-worshiper is silly enough to burn his skin; he knows to the minute when he has had enough.) No, the after-effects are a sense of well-being, of calmed nerves, of inner vitality.

It takes time, patience, understanding, and perhaps above all, personal freedom to become a regular communicant. How shall a shop or office worker join when his nine-to-five schedule imprisons his body while the sun is at its best? We L streeters were, relatively speaking, free men. Some of us shifted our jobs, or indeed gave them up altogether, if they interfered with our devotions. Freedom, a head not readily overheated, a pagan regard for the comeliness and well-being of one's body, a ruminative turn of mind, a sound belief in the important function of laziness in life, a hatred of the round, silly face of a clock, an understanding of the irrele-

vancy of clothes—who shall say of what strange and primitive juices, what fantastic combination of electrons, the true sun-worshiper is made?

L Street, I have not trod your sacred portals for many years, but your lessons have never been forgotten. I have bowed my body to the sun half-way around the world, in season and out, legally and illegally, whenever opportunity offered. And in what strange corners have I not met my brothers, practicing their devotions before scientific sanction was ever heard of. We are an old battalion. We have stripped in the teeth of all the mores and all the constables. We have kept on dune and ledge, and trafficked not with hospital and clinic.

Once I saw a million brothers, yea, and sisters, too. I witnessed the incredible spectacle of fifty thousand brown bodies in one work-day noon on the Mowcow River—some in bathing suits, some in trunks, perhaps the majority as God made them. What were systems of government in the face of this fact? These people were my people, and I cared not how deplorable their civil institutions.

A whole city throwing its clothes into the air! America, we shall undress and bronze you yet! Shall we? The prescriptions are going out by the thousands from the highest medical authorities, but if it is the natural sunlight you desire, in quantities greater than that provided by a bathing suit, try and secure it. It has taken me a dozen years of skilled investigation to learn how to secure my share, nor am I always successful.

I have been associated with many reform movements in my life, and it is with considerable astonishment that I find one actually gaining ground. Two years ago a man was arrested at a Florida beach for appearing in trunks. T hasty signal from a brother was all that kept me from sharing his cell. This year, if you please, the municipality has provided two solariums, male and female, where one may spend the day without a stitch.

Most of this sun-worship I believe is profoundly good. Is it only a temporary craze? Will America strip by the million in the next few years, only to be back in its shroud in a decade? I neither know nor greatly care. If the republic wants to go native and can hold to it with any fidelity, it will probably do more than any other conceivable action to balance the inhibitions and pathological crippling induced by the machine age and the monstrous cities in which we live. It but wants a new fad to play with and presently to toss aside, I know where to find sheltered spots where comes the sun and the wind and men come not.—The Nation.

Sea Nocturne

Lights on the sea-line go,
Vibrating to and fro,
Errant, mysterious, low,
Seen bright, seen twinkled;
But that one steadfast spark
That cleaves the drooping dark,
For what all fortunate barque
Is it kindled?

With far flung beam it stands,
On rough and perilous lands,
Warning with upraised hands
The gray shipmasters;
Why did no beacon free
Flare out on life's road sea,
To warn and presage me
Of Love's disasters?

—James Grant in the London Spectator.

Conservatives in Quebec

Chicoutimi Progres du Saguenay (Ind.): (The increased activity of the Conservatives in the province is a good thing.) We rejoice for two reasons: First, because the province needs a good Opposition to watch over a good Government. Secondly, because it is desirable that the people, instead of having to accept one program, should be able to choose between two programs which are each one the result of study and the work of a group composed of intelligent men, eager to serve their country, in fact real economists. Whether Conservatives or Liberals are in power is of little importance, provided the policy of the province is progressive and aims at increasing the happiness of all of us.

Imagination

It is a wonder how people who lack the imaginative faculty escape from the prison house of the trivial round of life. They must get dreadfully bored with their own dullness, and occasionally long for the glorious faculty for building castles in the air, those insubstantial fortresses to which the spirit of man retreats when the world is too much for its peace and quietude.

Imagination is a priceless door of escape. I cannot conceive of anyone deliberately closing and locking it. Yet, as people grow up, they do. They "put away childish things" with distressing literalness. Among these is the delightful recreation of building castles in the air.



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Tasty Recipes

MIXED PICKLES

Ingredients.—An equal weight of small mild onions, sour apples and cucumbers, vinegar to cover. To each pint of vinegar add 2 tablespoonfuls of salt, ½ a teaspoonful of pepper, a good pinch of cayenne. Method.—Peel and slice the onions, apples and cucumbers thinly, put them into wide-necked bottles, add the seasoning and sherry, cover with vinegar, and cork closely. This pickle may be used the following day, and should not be kept for any length of time.

Rhubarb Jam.

Ingredients.—To each lb. of rhubarb, allow 1 lb. of preserving sugar ½ a teaspoonful of ground ginger, and the finely-grated rind of ½ a lemon. Method.—Remove the outer stringy part of the rhubarb, cut it into short lengths, and weigh it. Put it into a preserving-pan with sugar, ginger, and lemon-rind in the above proportions, place the pan by the side of the fire, and let the contents come very slowly to boiling point, stirring occasionally meanwhile. Boil until the jam sets quickly when tested on a cold plate. Pour it into pots, cover closely, and store in a cool place. Time.—From 1 to 1½ hours.

RHUBARB JAM

Ingredients.—¼ pint of double cream, ¾ oz. of castor sugar, or to taste, 1 teaspoonful of sherry, 1 teaspoonful of brandy (the wine and brandy may be omitted), the juice and finely-grated rind of ½ a small lemon. Method.—Put the sherry, brandy, sugar, lemon-juice and rind into a basin, and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the cream, and whip slowly at first and afterwards more quickly until firm. Serve as required. Raisin or other sweet wine may replace the sherry and brandy, or an equal quantity of raspberry or strawberry syrup. Time.—About 15 minutes. Sufficient for 3 or 4 persons.

PINEAPPLE SOUFFLE

Ingredients.—Preserved pineapple,



Won Rose Trophy

Judged among thousands of blooms at the Rose Society of Ontario show, held recently at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, the above "Gloire de Ch. Guinoissette" was awarded the Challenge Trophy as best rose exhibited. It was raised by Mrs. R. W. Dixon, of Toronto, in an outdoor garden. The roses on exhibit ranged from pure white of large and small dimensions to the vivid red of American Beauties, making the ballroom at the Royal York a blaze of perfumed color. There was a record number of entries this year.

4 oz. of best flour, 4 oz. of castor sugar, 4 oz. of butter, ½ pint of milk, 3 eggs, 2 inches of vanilla pod, angelica. Method.—Bring the milk and vanilla pod to boiling-point, then draw the stewpan aside for about ½ an hour for the contents to infuse. Meanwhile heat the butter in another stewpan, stir in the flour, cook over the fire for a few minutes, then add the strained milk, and stir and boil well. Let it cool slightly, then beat in the yolks of eggs, add the sugar, 2 good tablespoonfuls of pineapple cut into small dice, and very lightly stir in the stiffly-whipped whites of eggs. Have ready a well-greased soufflemould with the bottom decorated with strips or circles of angelica and pineapple, pour in the mixture, cover with a greased paper, and steam very gently from 45 to 60 minutes. Unmould, and serve with pineapple or other sweet sauce. Time.—From 1 to 1½ hours. Sufficient for 5 or 6 persons.

TO CURE HAM

Ingredients.—For 2 hams, weighing each about 16 or 18 lb., allow 1 lb. of moist sugar, 1 lb. of common salt, 2 oz. of saltpetre, 1 quart of good vinegar. Method.—As soon as the pig is cold enough to be cut up, take the 2 hams, rub them well with common salt, and leave them in a large pan for 3 days. When the salt has drawn out all the blood, drain the hams and throw the brine away. Mix sugar, salt, and saltpetre together in the above proportion, rub the hams well with these, and put them into a vessel large enough to hold them, always keeping the salt over them. Let them remain for 3 days, then pour over them 1 quart of good vinegar. Turn them in the brine every day for a month, then drain them well, and rub them with bran. Have them smoked over a wood fire, and be particular that the hams are hung as high as possible from the fire; otherwise the fat will melt and they will become dry and hard. Time.—To be pickled, 1 month; to be smoked, 1 month. Sufficient for 2 hams of 18 lb. each.

MUTTON COLLOPS

Ingredients.—6 or 8 slices of cooked mutton, 2 shallots or 1 small onion finely chopped, ½ a teaspoonful of powdered mixed herbs, ½ a saltspoonful of flour, fat for frying, ½ pint of gravy or stock, lemon-juice or vinegar, salt, pepper. Method.—Cut the meat into round slices about 2½ inches in diameter. Mix together the shallot, herbs, mace, and a little pepper and salt, and spread this mixture on one side of the meat. Let it remain for about one hour, then fry quickly in hot fat, taking care to cook the side covered with the mixture first. Remove and keep hot, sprinkle the flour on the bottom of the pan, which should contain no more fat than the flour will absorb, let it brown, then add the gravy or stock. Season to taste, boil gently for about 15 minutes, add a little lemon-juice or vinegar to flavour, and pour the sauce round the meat. Time.—About ½ hours. Sufficient, 1 lb. for 3 or 4 persons.

The Empire Crusade

Saturday Review (London): Lord Beaverbrook and the supporters of his interesting Empire scheme are proceeding on the assumption that all units overseas would from sentiment and economic motive approve of free trade within the Empire. There is one unit which would neither feel the urge of sentiment nor admit the economic argument—India. Now India takes from this country about \$85,000,000 worth of goods. As even Australia takes only about £60,000,000 and Canada only about £30,000,000, the attitude of India cannot be deemed unimportant. Even now it is impossible to impose on India any fiscal system of which her few thousand active Home Rulers disapprove; in the near future it will be impossible to prevent the erection of a lofty barrier against any kinds of British goods.

There is a best way to live, and it is best to live the best way.



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Usefulness

The duty which no one can disclaim, the test which no one may evade, and the prize which no one will despise are all inclined in the homely word of usefulness.—Bishop Thorold.

A Fervent Heart

O! What a glory doth this world put on for him who, with fervent heart, goes forth under the bright and glorious sky, and looks on duties well performed and days well spent.—Longfellow.



"Jack kissed me last night." "Bet he got painter's colic. You do put it on thick."