

An Artificial Plague

Paul Ross

YOUTH IS PLAGUED by a disease which he considers both serious and momentous, a difficulty which must be coped with if he is to enjoy daily life. This menace to his happiness is the Risk of Being Unpopular, an infection that must never become imbedded in his character. Youth is firmly convinced that he will suffer greatly if he allows the Risk to gain a foothold in his personality. Such an addition to his traits would undoubtedly warrant the censure of the Group, which has as its prime asset a remedy known as Popularity. This cure for the Risk is obtained by obeying regulations which are necessary for insuring approval by the omnipotent Group and the subsequent defeat of the plague.

The Group's lead in all matters must be satisfactorily followed, or Youth will not be granted membership. Whatever course the Group decides to pursue, Youth must likewise pursue, unless he wishes to be adjudged an Individualist. Within the Group's social order the Individualist is not welcomed, for each plan conceived by the Group is injected with Mediocrity, a poison denounced and abhorred by the Individualist. Upon this poison hangs the Group's existence, and naturally any attempt to outlaw its use is thwarted. Since Mediocrity is part of each activity of the Group, members are likely to be duly influenced by its presence. However, the organization preaches that it is more advantageous to partake of Mediocrity and remain a member than to be an Individualist and find oneself without the endorsement of the Group. If Youth follows the program of Mediocrity, his initiation into the Group will be a certainty.

Frequently the injection of Mediocrity causes the germ Evil to materialize. The appearance of this germ delights the Group because its desires have been whetted by previous contacts with this exciting medium. Their lives have become so accustomed to its effects that no longer do they recognize it as a once-despised germ. Youth's membership in the Group entails succumbing to Evil's fever. After he has fallen prey to it, he finds that it affords him much pleasure and relaxation. No longer does he need to be cautious in avoiding its temptations; the mental relief is refreshing. Youth soon discovers that the accounts of his accomplishments in cheating on exams awes his fellow members; he disregards his early decision to abstain from drinking and immediately begins to enjoy the experience of intoxication; he adds a few indecent phrases to his vocabulary so that he can further resemble his fellow members. All these actions induced by Evil are performed by Youth to demonstrate this devotion to the Group and its Mediocrity.

Youth's greatest fault lies in his belief that the Group's standards are supreme. Without the acceptance of these canons he feels that he is unable to ward off that dread plague, the Risk of Being Unpopular. In obeying these standards Youth forsakes his resistance to Evil just for the opportunity of obtaining the remedy, Popularity. To him the approval of the Group is necessary for successful living. He does not realize that the standard of the Group usually conflicts with the real determining factor for successful living—the Christian standards of conduct. Youth should not disavow the Christian way of life for the artificial comfort of Popularity; the Risk of Being Unpopular never justifies such a procedure.

My Misfortunes

John S. Glassford

I HAVE ALWAYS had more than my share of trouble. I have been bitten by dogs, shot at by irate householders and I also have played the part of a side of beef for a few seconds, to name just a few of my misfortunes. I am always the one who is hurt or who is caught when I try to do anything. You have seen people who drive forty or fifty miles an hour in thirty mile-an-hour zones and never get arrested. But if I were to drive thirty-one or thirty-two miles an hour, I would probably get a ticket.

When I was about five years old, I was swimming at the Riviera Club. I jumped in backwards and hit my chin on the side of the pool. Result: four clamps. At the age of seven I tried to make friends with a neighbor's dog. Apparently he was anti-social because I am now one of the few Butlerites with only one dimple. Then one day when I was playing "cops and robbers" (I was nine at the time), in a friend's basement, I jumped off a stairway and caught my arm on a clothes hook. As a result I was in the hospital two days and had thirty-two stitches taken in my arm. My Mother said that trouble comes in threes; so I was not to have any more accidents. But a few years ago I was out on Halloween with a few friends. We had been playing a few pranks, nothing serious, but when we went to one house and gave it our "Grade A" treatment, the man of the house started out after us with a shotgun. He fired once, but I was the only one who got hit. I then found out what it is like to have rock salt picked out of the seat of my pants.

I have given my parents more than their share of gray hair with my escapades. I think that I have had my share of hard luck, but you can never tell. I may live to be eighty or ninety, but at my present rate I do not see how. It may be that I am one of the poor unfortunates who has been deserted by Lady Luck.