

"Repeat that, please." Miss Phillips gave Susie a puzzled look. Susie repeated it defiantly, exactly as she had spelled it the first time. The teacher looked at her sharply. "That is incorrect, Susie. You may take your seat."

Susie went to her desk, avoiding a foot thrust into the aisle in front of her. The dirty-faced girl who sat beside her snickered behind her hand, then exploded into a giggle, and the whole class laughed.

"Ha, ha," whispered the fat boy. "Teacher's pet ain't as smart as she thinks!" Susie regarded the inkwell in the corner of her desk intensely, wishing the bell would ring. It did, after a few minutes that seemed years to Susie. The class lined up at the door, filed out of the room and down the stairs. She would be safe as far as the corner; a big girl from the sixth grade whose mother was the Scout troop leader walked that far with her. Maybe they wouldn't, this time. Maybe just once they'd leave her alone. She turned the corner slowly.

"Ha, ha, Susie missed!"

"Teacher's pet missed a word!"

"Teacher's pet's a dummy! Teacher's pet's a dummy!" The fat boy jerked off one of her blue bows and threw it into a puddle. A big red-haired one pulled her sash untied. Susie walked on as fast as she could, trying to shut their jeers out of her mind, trying not to let them see that she could scarcely keep back the tears. When at last she reached the corner of her own yard, she ran around to the back door, so they couldn't see her crying. Her mother was in the kitchen. Susie tried to slip up the back stairs, but her mother heard a sniffle and called her back.

"Why, Susie, what's the matter? Come tell mother about it." Sobbing with great trembling gasps, Susie burrowed into her mother.

"I—I spelled a word wrong!" she howled, crying harder.

"Is that all! Heavens, child, everyone makes mistakes! What was the word?"

"Encyclopedia."

"Why, Susie, you know how to spell that. I expect you were nervous; it can happen to anyone. You mustn't feel so bad about a little thing like that."

The Individualist

Jean K. Rauch

THE word *individualist* is derived from the Latin word *individuus*, which means 'indivisible.' The suffix *ist* indicates that an individualist is 'one who is' indivisible. The word's meaning has been gradually expanded and enriched until now it suggests one whose way of life is determined by a certain philosophy known as individualism.

The individualist of today is a man who thinks for himself and

acts upon what he believes is right. His conscience is his sternest critic. To live up to his name, he must be honest and have an objective outlook upon all he sees. He feels it his duty to be forever searching, inquiring, and thinking. Since these attributes often set him apart from his fellow men, it usually follows that he must be a courageous man if he is to remain uncontrolled, unrestricted, and uncoerced by the multitudes of conformists around him who believe that he should adhere, as they do, to the prevalent outlook of the day.

It is not impossible for the outward actions of a conformist and an individualist to be regarded as identical, yet this judgment is superficial, since the motives behind their behavior are entirely different. The conformist believes and acts as he does, because he has been told to do so or because he is mimicking others; the individualist believes and acts as he does, because he has weighed all possible facts available to him and has come to independent decisions. He holds the same sentiments as did the author of this poem:

Truth: be thou more precious than possessions without end;
Wisdom: be thou more sacred than the pleasing of a friend;
Courage: be thou our strength to gain the distant goal;
Beauty: send thou a cleansing wonder to the soul.

The individualist has high regard for the mind of man. He studies its finest works and attempts to model his life after the lives he deems to have been well lived, but he does not believe that all goodness, virtue, and greatness lie in the past. He believes that there will be progress and that men, now and in the future, are, and will be, responsible for that progress. He will not be blind to new ideas because they suggest change, but will be open-minded and objective, without undue emotionality and sentimentality. Therefore, when he encounters a new idea which does not seem to him worthy of his fealty, he will respect it as he would wish his own ideas to be respected, and even though he cannot support this novel view, unless it threatens his very existence he will give over to time the duty of destroying it. Inherent in the nature of any man who believes in the individual is the desire to give every man the right to think and the right to speak.

Unfortunately, in America today, conformity is very much the fashion. Although the rights of the individualist are protected by our Constitution, social and economic pressures are sometimes brought to bear against him. A television program, which was recently produced by the Department of Education of New York State, illustrates how these pressures operate in modern businesses. The purpose of the program was to demonstrate the usefulness of psychological tests in selecting prospective candidates for executive positions in industry. Here are a group of questions and answers which summarize the program's content. (The employee is asking the questions; the proponent of the tests is giving the answers.)

Question: What is the purpose of this test?

Answer: To indicate how you will fit into this organization as a member of the management.

Question: By what standard will I be judged?

Answer: By whether or not you are a conformist. The norm is considered perfect.

Question: How do you know that I will not "cheat?"

Answer: We know that you will "cheat," either consciously or unconsciously. All people do. This will be taken into consideration in grading the tests.

Question: But, by being unethical, I could give you an entirely false impression of my personality. I do wish to be accepted for this job, you know.

Answer: Yes, we realize this, but if you are intelligent enough to fool us, then the chances are that you are intelligent enough to be a useful employee.

Question: Therefore, if I realize that I am a non-conformist, my only chance to be accepted for an executive position is to be dishonest. Is that what you are saying?

Answer: Well, let's put it this way: you must be clever.

Question: May I ask how you rate a person who ranks high aesthetically on your tests?

Answer: Many companies have adopted the standard that any person showing an aesthetic preference more than seven percent of the time is automatically eliminated.

Question: Could you explain what you mean by "a person who shows an aesthetic preference?"

Answer: He would be one who prefers music and good books to, say, football and social functions.

Question: Has this method been used in picking our industrial leaders of today?

Answer: Well, that is an interesting thing; as a matter of fact, no. The presidents of thirteen of the most important companies in the country were asked to take this test. They were told to be absolutely honest. Mind you, they are all top-notch in their fields, but they all flunked miserably; they all were individualists. But I have no doubt that if those men were in this room right now, applying for a job, they would pass with flying colors. You see, what one has to do is to be a "conformist in public and an individualist in private."

Is such hypocrisy really essential and desirable in our country today? Are tolerance and understanding to be twisted into a ve-

neer of comradeship? Must the sensitivity and the kindness of tact be degenerated into out and out dishonesty in order to preserve one's right to earn a living? Neither business, nor government, nor church, nor private citizen can force the falseness of unnatural conformity without first destroying the integrity of the individual. Imposing conformity as a prerequisite for leadership is unrealistic, unhealthy, and unworkable. We would be wiser if we sought to develop an atmosphere of appreciation for those who are capable of original thinking. They have shown the way in the development of our civilization to its present peak, and their distinguishing characteristic—the uniqueness of their own individuality—is still our most valuable possession. Without it, the widening flow of our culture would dry up in rivulets of bigotry and stagnate in ignorance and intolerance.

The Visit

Norman Wilkins

THERE was a funny odor in the house, like the time I was sick and the doctor had given me that awful tasting stuff. Daddy was no longer in his bed where he had been for so many months, and I couldn't find him anywhere. The door to the hall downstairs was closed, but I could hear people coming and going most of the day. Mama didn't say a thing, and I was kept upstairs until Mom Newton came to take me to her farm.

* * *

The spring on the screen door needed oiling, for it clearly announced when someone came out the back door of the farm house. Quickly I dried my tears and scooped deeper into the black earth surrounding the blooming honeysuckle bush. If I were very still, Mom Newton might not see me, with my eyes red. It wasn't her fault that I felt lonely.

Shuffling steps rounded the corner and stopped in front of my diggings. All I could see was legs and shoes. Her legs were covered with heavy, brown stockings, and her black shoes could scarcely hold her feet. In fact, there were parts of the shoes cut away. The holes showed bumps on the side of her feet which seemed to be forming extra toes. I looked down at my own shoes. They were caked with dirt, but they didn't have the openings in them like Mom Newton's. I would have to clean my shoes before I went home this afternoon. It wouldn't be appreciated if I tracked in dirt at home, but Mom Newton never seemed to mind. At least, she never said anything.

"Why, Charles, I didn't know you were playing in here." I rolled out from under the bush, brushing myself as I came. "Next time I'll give you an old spoon so you won't have to use that old tin can to dig with. You might hurt yourself on a sharp edge." Study-