GETTING READY FOR EXPRESSION IN THE ARTS

JOHN ERSKINE, ΦΒΚ Columbia
Member of the Editorial Board of The American Scholar

When Thomas Jefferson was seventy-five years old his advice was asked about the proper education of a young girl. “A plan of female education,” he wrote, “has never been a subject of systematic contemplation with me.” But as his letter proceeds he makes some neat observations about the advantage of learning dancing, drawing, and music. “Music,” he tells us, “is invaluable where a person has an ear. . . . It furnishes a delightful recreation for the hours of repose from the cares of the day, and lasts us through life.”

Just forty years earlier Jefferson wrote to a friend in France a letter revealing a much more vigorous faith in the importance of the arts, especially of music. Here is the Jefferson who believed that competent expression in the arts is necessary for any complete articulation of political, or social, or humane ideals.

The bounds of an American fortune will not admit the indulgence of a domestic band of musicians, yet I have thought that a passion for music might be reconciled with that economy which we are obliged to observe. I retain among my domestic servants a gardener, a weaver, a cabinet-maker, and a stonemason, to which I would add a vinaigrier. In a country where, like yours, music is cultivated and practiced by every class of men, I suppose there might be found persons of these trades who could perform on the French horn, clarinet, or hautboy, and bassoon, so that one might have a band . . . without enlarging their domestic expenses. . . . Without meaning to give you trouble, perhaps it might be practicable for you . . . to find out such men disposed to come to America.

Even in Jefferson’s day and in his own experience there were beginnings of that amateur music-making which should characterize a democracy, and which sets an example for the practice of the other arts. Almost every man in Virginia, as Jefferson would say, “had an ear” played the flute—Jefferson himself, for example, and Patrick Henry, and George Washington. The advantage of the flute was its high degree of portability.

In our country today the advance in all the arts is so great that we might easily indulge in a dangerous self-satisfaction. But if we take a long view of our progress, the most promising symptom in our national life is the rapid growth of the arts among the people at large. Everywhere we are learning to draw or paint, or carve, or model, or sing, or play, not primarily because any particular art is to be our pro-

Brides:—You and others, including the postmaster or any person to whom the postmaster delivers this, should send notices of changed names or addresses or of deaths to ΦΒΚ, 12 East 44th Street, New York City.
fession, but because we are preparing for life.

But here again we should not be too easily satisfied. The proper use of the arts is to articulate our ideals. To say all that the human spirit yearns for, we need all the tongues. The higher mankind rises, the more obvious the need is that every individual should have the technique of as many arts as possible.

There is reason to doubt that we yet recognize this essential truth. Perhaps we have got no further than the very elementary conception of culture which is concerned with the best that has already been said and thought in the world. Until we become completely self-expressive, our culture will remain memorial and retrospective.

If we are not careful, the growing love of art in our country which leads young and old to practice music or painting or sculpture may end in the sterile condition of the old Chinese scholarship. All the censorship which misguided governments impose are less malignant than the censorship the artist imposes on himself when he celebrates by-gones which he knows only by hearsay, instead of the glories and the needs of the moment in which he lives.

Because of this self-imposed censorship, American artists have been caught napping in the present grave challenge to the democracies of the world. Most of our writers, dramatists and draughtsmen can express a valuable and vigorous hate of those hostile to the democratic idea, but argument from hatred is an undemocratic, a despotic, procedure, and to adopt it is to sell out democracy. What we need just now are artist-spokesmen who can represent all that we find precious in our way of life. I regret the emotional condition of those fellow-writers who refuse to have their books published in Germany. Should the Germans be deprived of democratic books just because Hitler attacks democracy? Or are we afraid our books are not really representative of democracy?

In the World War Switzerland was a duelling ground for propaganda. The German advocates tried to persuade the Swiss that France was decadent, lagging behind the march of civilization. The French countered by sending to Geneva a troupe of her best actors and actresses to perform the best French plays.

If now we wished to show the German people the best of democratic life in America, which American painters, sculptors, musicians, dramaticists, poets, novelists, would we send?

It is time we got ready to express ourselves.

Editor's Note.—This is a digest of a radio address delivered on May 12, 1939, in the Phi B K series, "Get Ready for Tomorrow."

Volunteers to the Defense

ALPHA GAMMA DELTA, international women's fraternity, assembled in biennial convention on June 29, voluntarily voted a gift of $200 to Phi B K's program for the Defense of the Humanities and Intellectual Freedom, telegraphing:

We are happy to join in the work of your organization whose objectives we are proud to support in all our chapters.

The Cum Laude Society, organized in 1906 for the promotion of scholarship in secondary schools and closely resembling Phi B K in methods and standards, voted a gift of $100 to the fund.

Pi Beta Phi, national fraternity for college women, sent $150 and these gracious words:

The fraternity is happy indeed to ask for the privilege of having a small part in the campaign, in recognition of the honor which has come to individual members of Pi Beta Phi in their election to Phi Kappa, and in appreciation of the nation-wide service which Phi Beta Kappa has long given in the fight for intellectual freedom.

Spontaneous cooperation has also come from several local Phi B K groups. For instance one check came with this formal resolution:

Be It Resolved: That the Florida Alpha Chapter of Phi B K, situated at the Florida State College for Women, pledges its own support, both moral and financial, to the Phi B K Defense Fund for the Humanities and Intellectual Freedom, and also urges upon all Floridians, whether members of Phi B K or not, the importance of supporting every organized effort to maintain the freedom of thought and breadth of culture which have contributed so effectively to this country's greatness.

Who's News Today

BY LEMUEL F. PABON

The absent-minded professor is one up on the hard-headed banker. When Dr. James Monroe Smith, president of the University of Louisiana, started branching out, before he became a fugitive, sundry bankers were eager to lend him money without collateral. One banker was hurt because he hadn't been declared in on a $500,000 touch and insisted on showing out $100,000. But when the University of Louisiana wanted a charter from Phi Beta Kappa, the national scholarship fraternity, in 1936, the national officers sent a few scholars down to Baton Rouge to look over the plant and the manager.

They refused the charter. William A. Shimer, national secretary of Phi Beta Kappa, today explained this refusal, to this writer, as follows:

"When Phi Beta Kappa's committee on qualification made an investigation of the university in 1938—the second investigation in recent years—it again declined to recommend the institution for a charter, largely because of lack of confidence in the administration due mainly to its political tie-up."

At the time of the first investigation, it was erroneously reported that Dr. Smith was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. This department was led to error by this report and wrongly identified Dr. Smith as a member. This correction is especially important in view of the fact that the fraternity is making a gallant fight for the renovation of our national democracy and just now has more of a clinical than fraternal interest in the strange goings-on in Louisiana.

The myth of the cloistered and gullible schoolman is again assailed by news of the appointment of Jean Valentine, president of the University of Rochester, to a directorship of the Freeport Sulphur Company. He is a sure-enough Phi Beta Kappa and they are proud of him. Now 38 years old, he achieved high academic distinction as a Rhodes scholar and as a professor in the department of history, arts and letters at Yale University. Previously, he was assistant professor of English at Swarthmore, his alma mater.

Excerpt from a column in The New York Sun, June 30, 1939.
American Mother for 1939

Richard Cabot

GORDON W. ALLPORT,
ΦBK Harvard
Associate Professor of Psychology, Harvard

Richard Cabot, physician-philosopher, died at his home in Cambridge on May 7, 1939, in his seventy-first year. In his last will and testament he declared that his life had been one of "almost unbroken happiness." Others would add that it was also one of unbroken service to humanity, for he had devoted himself with all his singularly effective talents to the conserving and bettering of human life.

His many books, written in a lively and graceful style, show how richly his life-work combined the values of science with the values of art. Theory and application were for him inextricable.

To him problems of morality were pre-eminent. The Meaning of Right and Wrong (1933) gives comprehensive expression to his own ethical code which he taught with vigor and controversy. At the time of his death he was working on a final volume, Creation, which was to draw together the many threads of his interest and give mature expression to his deep religious faith.

As an ardent lover of moral philosophy, of great and humane ideas, he stood out above his fellows. His enthusiasm for the creators of moral ideas was often intense. Of New Englanders he especially admired Hocking and Southard, Royce and Emerson. The melioristic tradition of his native New England was congenial to him. He was a reformer, and he liked reformers. It was always individuals, leaders of thought, moral pioneers who won his support; never barren causes nor lifeless institutions. Though by no means a radical, Cabot was often found in the vanguard of progressive thought because provocative ideas so readily fired his imagination.

For him the test of every idea was its capacity to add to human stature. Through growing, each in his individual way, man expresses his reverence for God. In education, in work, in play, in love, in worship, in art, one grows, and perhaps especially in music. Aesthetic discipline too is required for growth; Richard Cabot had as little use for self-indulgence as did the New England Puritans of old. Yet if growth requires self-discipline it likewise requires liberty. He wanted morality and freedom, and he fought for both.

Richard Cabot did all that he did with gusto. He found joy in his teaching, in social service, in writing his score of well-known books, and happiness in his many enthusiasms and aspirations. His course was steadfast. Yet self-assured and tenacious as he was he could yield suddenly in the course of a battle and say, "I am wrong, you were right." And when he admitted his mistakes of judgment he admitted them wholeheartedly. He taught others to learn by their errors as he learned by his. In all that he did he was a magnificent man.

Editor’s Note.—Richard Clarke Cabot was born in Brookline, Mass., on May 21, 1868. He held the degrees of A.B. and M.D. from Harvard, and was elected to ΦBK there in 1899. During his later years at Harvard he served as professor of both clinical medicine and social ethics.

Second year medical student (ΦBK 1917, C.C.N.Y.) needs loan of $500 to continue his study through the present year; maintained A average as undergraduate, is now head of class and has been awarded $250 city scholarship toward tuition. Educators will testify as to ability and character. Address Member 229, ΦBK, 12 East 4th Street, New York, N. Y.
The Defense Program

To date approximately $38,000 has been subscribed in New York City to the Phi B K Defense Fund for the Humanities and Intellectual Freedom. Only about half the members in the City have as yet been seen, and most of the potentially large gifts are not being solicited until the balance needed to achieve the $300,000 goal has become evident.

Committees are being set up in every community. Each member may expect to receive a “To the Defense” booklet and a personal visit. The visitor can be made happy either by a contribution or by some other expression of appreciation of his work for Phi B K. The visits should be completed as early this fall as possible in order to leave time to obtain large gifts so that they and the totals for each community, State, and chapter can be announced at the big dinner on February 20. In published reports also each gift will be credited to the chapter, the State, and the community.

The Defense Program is stimulating new life in Phi B K. Dr. Finley, the general chairman, is receiving many encouraging letters. A Missouri chairman writes, “I am in hearty accord with the idea that Phi B K should be more than a ‘mutual admiration society,’” and a Texas chairman:

The standards Phi B K has consistently maintained neither the public nor the individual dares discard, lest disintegration of all we most cherish in our civilization set in with a vengeance. Phi B K being what it is, the Defense Fund appears inevitable. I have thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from The Key Reporter through the years. I am grateful for any opportunity to repay some of the debt I owe Phi B K.

Chairmen appointed to date are listed below. Other names will appear in later issues. Volunteer assistants should report to the local chairman or to Dr. John H. Finley, 12 E. 44th St., New York City.

Fellow Students Present Keys

RICHARD L. GREENE,
Phi B K Rochester

The actual process of obtaining possession of a Phi B K key is at many colleges an extremely informal one. It was so at the University of Rochester until a few years ago.

It was the students themselves who suggested a change in procedure and carried it out with the active help of Professor Clarence King Moore, formerly secretary of the Chapter. The Students’ Associations of the two coordinate colleges for men and women, deciding that high scholarship was an activity as deserving of reward as athletics or journalism, voted to purchase the keys for all men and women elected to Phi B K and to present them publicly. This action at once met with the enthusiastic approval of the Chapter, the faculty, and, of course, the initiates. It shows every sign of being continued indefinitely.

The expressed wish of the students for wider public recognition of the honor of election to Phi B K has led the Chapter to provide an evening’s exercises for which a place is reserved each April in the University calendar. The initiation ceremonies are held in the late afternoon, and the new members are then entertained by the Chapter at a dinner to which all members of Phi B K in Rochester and vicinity are invited. The company adjoins to a college auditorium for the public proceedings, to which the fellow-students and families of the initiates are specially invited. The new members are in cap and gown and enter in an academic procession supported by a fair representation of the faculty. The annual Phi B K oration is delivered by a distinguished visiting speaker. The presidents of the two Students’ Associations make short (and invariably good) speeches and, as the candidates file past them, present the keys amid applause of unmistakable sincerity. An attendance of 600 at the meeting is not uncommon.

There can be no question of the value to the College and to the Society of this “Rochester plan.” It has notably increased undergraduate interest in Phi B K and in those elected, making the students feel, as some have expressed it, that the election “really amounts to something after all.” The campus newspapers are eager to run an “exclusive” story on the election each year, and the
news is released to them before it is
given to the city papers, which are
equally eager. Student activities are
under review at many colleges, and
everywhere the key-word is “co-ordination.” It would be hard to find a better example of co-ordination than this plan, whereby college, honorary society, and
the self-governing body of all the students
join in paying a tribute, at once
ceremonial and practical, to success in
the most important activity of college
men and women—the pursuit of
knowledge.

To ΦBKs in *Who’s Who*

HELP the cause by asking the editors
to include “Phi Beta Kappa” in
your write-up. There are 5,469 Φ BKs
in *Who’s Who*, an average of 1 in 6 or
more of 2 on every page of the volume.

Make Reservations Now

NEW YORK City’s second largest
dinner — over 3,000 and many
turned away — the Φ BK dinner at the
Hotel Astor last February 20, will be
duplicated next February 20 (1940).
Again many noted members will be on
the program and among the guests;
chapters and associations will be invited
to send official delegates, their college
banners and State flags; and the vital
theme to be announced for the occasion
will not exclude entertainment. The
jollity last February under the chair-
ships of Dr. Finley and Dr. Angell
gave the death thrust to the old canard
of Φ BK stodginess.

Members may bring guests. Reserva-
tions for individuals or groups or for
tables of ten will be accepted by the
Editor of *The Key Reporter* up to
the capacity of the rooms available.

Books to Own

The Book Committee: Dorothy Canfield
Fisher, Will D. Howe, Burton E. Liv-
ingston, Robert A. Millikan,
Irta Van Doren.

For the reader’s convenience
orders for any books or magazines will be
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any order of at least $6.00.

These Are Our Lives

University of North Carolina
Press, Chapel Hill, 1939. $2.

Most people who keep
track of publishing news at
all know now from reviews
and other comments that
the volume called *These are
Our Lives* is a collection of
thirty-five life-stories, chosen
from many more told by
wage-earning men and
women living in North Caro-
lina, Tennessee and Georgia
to W.P.A. workers on the
Federal Writers’ project in
those three States. Most peo-
ple also (I am judging by
my own experience) know
that these brief autobi-
ographical studies have been
highly praised by early read-
ers as “vivid,” “graphic,”
“powerful,” “invaluable,” “pungent,”
even “epoch-making,” as a picture of
the common life in the South. I wonder
if many people who have not read the
book and have heard all this about it,
feel the same emotional reluctance
about reading it which I had.

What did I expect? What was the
slight anticipatory distaste that was in
my mind, which I imagine may be in
the minds of many Americans? Was it
true that I was to be subjected to yet
another kind of propaganda, so un-
familiar and subtle that it might be hard
to penetrate and resist? Was it the
simpler, more natural human dread of
being plunged by these stories yet deeper
into the flood of hopeless human misery,
which inundates our consciousness in
these days? Did I imagine that landlords
and employers were to be presented as
willful oppressors — instead of as the
bewildered fellowmen they are?

Whatever it was, it vanished with
the first of these life-stories I read, the
one to which the book chanced to fall open
in my hands, “From Grease Monkey to
Knitter.” I passed from that to “A Day
at Kate Brunby’s House,” and then,
ennoblingly interested, surprised, in-
credulous, flicked over the pages and
choosing at random fell upon the high
comedy of “Easier Ways.” Then I laid
down the book to laugh at the tears
which had kept me from reading it. But
I insisted that the fault lay with the kind of
praise that has been given this collection.
The two words which best and
most completely describe it were not
among the many I had heard. Those
words are “human” and “authentic.”

Authentic first: the first impression,
the final impression made on the reader
by these life-stories is that they are true,
that they have not been doctored to
make them prove anything, either by
the person who took them down in their
rambling, deliciously folksy lingo, or by
any editor in the W.P.A. office. I have
never set foot in the deep South myself,
I know nothing about the life of the
working people there. I do not need
such special knowledge, only experience
of life itself to feel that this volume is
authentic. It has that unmistakable
accretion of natural, unforced truth-telling
which speaks out from an honest voice, a
clear and honest eye. And how racily
with the rich diversity of humanness are
these tales! With what easy power they
tear down out of the mind the cheap
and foolish idea that “poor people” see
different from other people! Here are we,
ourselves, as we would be if we had
been born Southern wage earners, white or black — as we are. Those commentators who have exclaimed that this book contained “invaluable” and “vivid” and “pungent” stuff are right. But first of all these should have told us that it is the very stuff of living.

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

The Letters of

Ralph Waldo Emerson


This most noted of \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) orators lives again from his 11th to his 78th year in 2,584 letters printed in the 3,200 pages of these six handsome volumes. The editor (\( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) Indiana) writes in his Introduction (54 pages):

The letters, with their changing moods and temperamental varieties of style, give us, no doubt, the most valuable glimpses we can hope to have of the essential personality of Emerson. But they are perhaps equally important for the light they throw on the events of his life, the genesis of his ideas, and the slow growth of his addresses, essays, and poems.

The letters and the excellent footnotes, which help greatly to make the reader “contemporary with the author” of the letters, contain more than two score references to \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \). Emerson always told his brothers who had been chosen as orator and poet for “\( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) day” at Harvard, a “day’’ mentioned in letters to Margaret Fuller, James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton, Bronson Alcott, and others. Much light is thrown on the famous oration delivered in 1837, “The American Scholar,” which gave the title to \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \)’s present quarterly. That this best known of the many thousand \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) orations was a stop-gap, and almost failed to be even that, is revealed by the letters. On June 22, 1837, Emerson was asked to substitute for the Reverend Dr. Wainwright, who had cancelled his engagement as the orator for the anniversary on August 31st. On June 19 Emerson had written of feeble health and on August 7: “All very well except that we cannot get any word from Olympus any Periclean word for \( \Phi \). \( B \). \( K. \)” Yet it was delivered on the 31st, and removed any doubt Carlyle still had about his young friend.

On other anniversaries Emerson gave a second \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) oration and a poem. He writes about several similar performances by others — most notably, one by Edward Everett on “The Circumstances Favorable to the Progress of Literature in America,” when General La Fayette was present.

A notable event in \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) history is sketched in a letter of August 15, 1831, to his brother Edward. Referring to John Quincy Adams, Emerson writes:

I heard him speak a good deal at two special meetings of \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) lately. He is antimason & the \( \Phi \) B \( \kappa \) have been convened to consider whether they will not alter their constitution & abolish secrets & obligations &c & fine meeting we had the speakers being A H & E Everett Judges Story & Jackson & Davis — J Q Adams, C. G. Loring, Dr Lowell Theophil Parsons & many more. and in conclusion we accepted report wh. made the changes & takes away the veto, & makes \( \frac{3}{4} \) of the votes a sufficient majority — & takes off the injunction of secrecy. Kent of Duxbury is poet for the Anniv. J. T. Austin, orator.

The letter goes on to reveal Emerson’s breadth of interest:

Sad political disclosures every day brings. Wo is me my dishonored country that such poor wretches should sit in the chairs of Washington Franklin & Adams. How doth the air now thunder with that once despised whisper “You can’t make a whisper out of air” I am trying to learn my own latitude but there is no horizon in C. St. If I was richer I wd. have an observatory. I am trying to learn the ethical truths that always allure me from my cradle till now & yet how slowly disclosed! That word Compensations is one of the watchwords of my spiritual world — & time & chance & sorrow & hope do not by their revelations abate my curiosity.

Dictatorship in the Modern World

A collection of essays edited by GUY STANTON FORD. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1939. $5.50.

No social fact of our time needs more to be understood by peoples of democratic faith than the fact of dictatorship. At the same time no social fact is more commonly misunderstood. There are still men in high places, for example, who regard the rise to power of Mussolini in Italy and of Hitler in Germany as a sort of protest — the protest of peoples who feel they have a grievance against the nations that dictated the terms of the Versailles Treaty. To men of this frame of mind the specific to be used against dictatorship is a simple one: remove the grievance by just the right amount of “appeasement” and you remove the dictator. It’s as simple as all that!

Such misconceptions can be cleared away only by careful analytical thinking that appreciates the complexity of social causation and has some idea of historical continuity. It is because the fifteen essays contained in the present volume (a revised and greatly enlarged edition of an earlier work of the same title, now out of print) are distinguished by thinking of this kind that they deserve to be read by everyone who enjoys, and would like to retain, the greatest possible freedom in ordering his life and affairs.

Interestingly enough, the book itself is a good example of the democratic way of doing things. In the hands of another editor — a sociologist, let us say, with a passion for unity and integration — each contributor would have been told substantially what he was to say. He

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