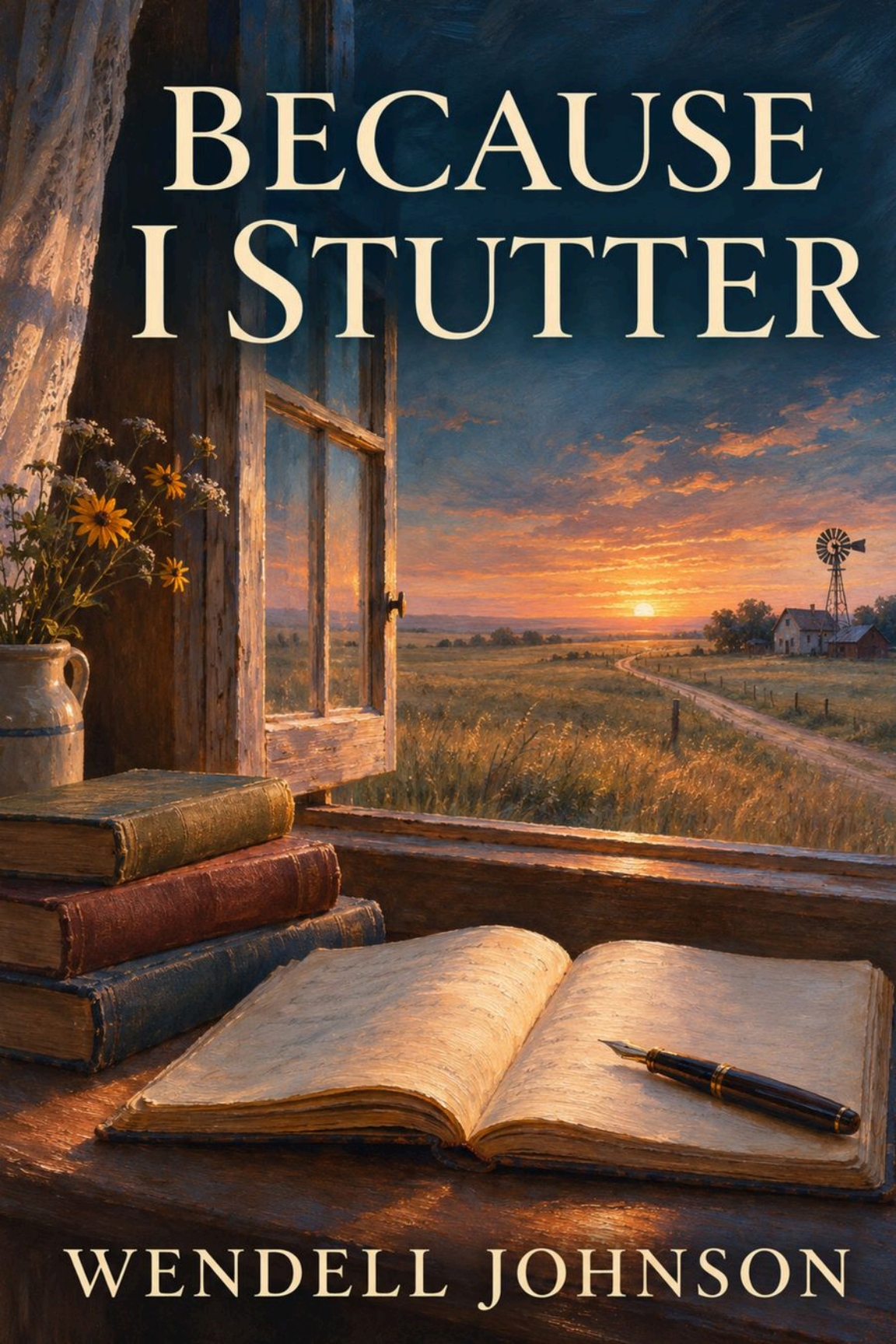
BECAUSE
I STUTTER
WENDELL JOHNSON

PIPCUB EDITIONS

Because I Stutter

Wendell Johnson

THE AUTHOR



Wendell Johnson

1906–1965

An original vignette inspired by the author's work.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendell Johnson

Wendell Johnson was an American psychologist, writer, and researcher in speech pathology. Born in Roxbury, Kansas, he experienced stuttering from childhood. He nevertheless became an accomplished student and athlete, serving as his high-school class president and valedictorian and captaining its basketball and baseball teams.

After two years at McPherson College, Johnson entered the University of Iowa in 1926. He initially hoped to become a writer and poet, and earned an honors degree in English. His participation in the university's early speech research brought his literary interests into contact with the study of communication.

Published in 1930, Because I Stutter follows his childhood, education, ambitions, and efforts to understand his own speech. The memoir values the individual experience behind a clinical label. Its account of writing, friendship, and belonging remains a personal document of its time; its explanations of stuttering belong to the history of the field.

TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER

By generous encouragement and suggestions Carl Emil Seashore and Lee Edward Travis have greatly assisted me in the writing of this book. As to the subject matter, it is my own life, in which a great many people have played such parts as I am grateful for. I regret that a more definite acknowledgment would be quite impossible.

W. J.

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INTRODUCTION

For several years we have been carrying on in our Iowa Speech Clinic laboratories research in the field of speech pathology. We have utilized largely physical equipment to record the particular reactions we were studying. We have found that the stutterer presents definite functional neuromuscular derangements during stuttering and differs from the normal speaker in certain neuromuscular functions not directly related to speech. But we have not paid much attention to the so-called subjective or personal aspect of the stutterer's difficulty. He was not asked to tell us anything about his views of the organic disturbances which accompanied his speech efforts. The point is that we sought and secured strictly objective instrumental determinations of the various abnormalities.

It seems to us, however, that now we have gone far enough towards the solution of certain problems by the instrumental method to take account profitably of the subjective or personal side of the stutterer's speech disorder. Other workers have considered after a fashion this phase of the problem in securing introspective data from their subjects at the time of examination to serve as supplementary material. Our aim is somewhat different. We wish to secure the stutterer's statement of his own reactions to his stuttering organism

and to society from the earliest incident of recall to the present moment.

We are very fortunate in having an ideal combination in Mr. Wendell Johnson, who is a stutterer with training in psychology and in writing. In addition, he has served for three years as a subject in numerous objective studies of stuttering and has been one of a large group subjected to corrective treatment for stuttering. Over half of this group of stutterers have recovered completely or shown marked improvement. At the present time Mr. Johnson enjoys a large measure of speech freedom. His improvement and the complete relief of others are the result of a certain type of training, based upon the concept that stuttering is a definite neuromuscular derangement of the functional type in which there is a general reduction in cortical activity. This reduction in cortical activity is due to transient and mutually inhibitive activities of the associative areas of the right and the left cerebral hemispheres. In the stutterer, instead of nervous energy flowing into one center of greatest facility in transmission, it flows into two centers of equal facility in transmission, which function in reaction patterns of opposite orientation and configuration to produce in the peripheral speech organs simultaneous or alternate opposition in muscular movement. The symptoms of stuttering are mainly signs of the rivalry between the two sides of the brain. They are of two kinds: those, such as tonic blocks, which show evidences of the simultaneous activity of two centers of opposite sign; and those, such as prolonged inspiration, the interruption of expiration, and clonic blocks, which indicate

the alternate activity of two centers of opposite sign.

The neurological basis of stuttering, which is a lack of a sufficiently dominant center of activity, is a functional variant. We may think of its existence in terms of a margin of dominance which exists in range from zero amount to a very large and safe amount in different individuals. If the margin is small, stimuli of slight emotional value and conditions which bring about small amounts of physical and mental fatigue will produce the stuttering. If there is zero amount of dominance, we have the stutterer who stutters under all conditions—in the quiet of his room as well as in a social situation. If the margin is large, we have the normal speaker under practically all physical and mental conditions.

The causes of a lack of dominance in one or the other of the two cerebral hemispheres—and consequently of stuttering—may be considered under two heads: heredity and environment. A certain number of children are born with no potentialities for the development of one center of hyper-excitability and hyper-irritability—the dominant center—or with only a very slight neuro-physiological bias in favor of a left-handed development which will be opposed by a right-handed environment. They generally stutter from the beginning. Others possess a natively dominant center which would warrant normal speech development were it not interfered with through birth injuries, physical diseases, emotional shocks, and educational practices which favor the shifting of left-handed children to the use of the right hand. The dominant center is the most easily affected by such

disturbing factors because it is the center of greatest susceptibility to all kinds of environmental stimuli.

In the corrective treatment of stuttering the sole aim is to build up or establish a single dominant center of activity in the one or the other of the two cerebral hemispheres. This is accomplished in the main by the development of a dominant motor lead through one side of the body. If careful laboratory examinations reveal that the motor facility as determined by training is out of harmony with the native physiologic leads, the attempt is made to reëstablish the native physiologic leads through training designed for that purpose. In a great number of cases this corrective training consists in having the individual return to the use of the left hand in all major manual functions, especially writing. The details of this training are too involved to be adequately presented here.

Although Mr. Johnson came to us as a "right-handed" individual, we have attempted, on the basis of laboratory findings, to make of him a thorough-going left-handed person. It is in connection with the laboratory work and his remedial training that he has prepared his subjective and personal side of the story. In certain instances it supports the instrumental findings and completes the picture. In other instances it opens up new problems and suggests new lines of approach. One of the most obvious contributions involved in Mr. Johnson's study is its forceful opposition to many of the ridiculous theories held in certain quarters and its attack upon the neglect and misconception so characteristic of the popular attitude towards stutterers. Its chief value, probably, is to give

parents and teachers an appreciation of the stutterer's real self—the feeling, sensing self which is so often ignored. Mr. Johnson's emphasis on the importance of this very point is not overdone. Our knowledge of the personal feelings of dozens of stutterers convinces us that he has expressed a common attitude among those of his type of disorder.

We wish to recommend heartily the value of the book as an original production for study by psychologists and psychiatrists; and we wish to emphasize its importance to parents and teachers who are concerned with the care of stuttering children. But, over and above the contribution of this little book to psychology and speech pathology, it stands as a memorable human document. In telling of the rôle that stuttering has played in his life, in the development of his personality, the author touches on a theme which is of keen interest to the public generally. To a subject which has been strangely neglected—the place of the stutterer in a glib society—he has given the weight of vital interest and significance.

LEE EDWARD TRAVIS

BECAUSE I STUTTER

CHAPTER I

MYSELF, A STUTTERER

I AM a stutterer. I am not like other people. I must think differently, act differently, live differently—because I stutter. Like other stutterers, like other exiles, I have known all my life a great sorrow and a great hope together, and they have made of me the kind of person that I am. An awkward tongue has molded my life—and I have only one life to live. I share, moreover, the grand assumption that we encounter among those men who are not contemplating suicide, the assumption that life comes first, life is significant, life is precious.

There has been built up by articulate man an intricate system of language, which has a peculiar capacity for fine shadings and blendings of meaning, for subtle symbolizations. This system of language is used by man for the purpose of translating muscle and nerve into business agreements and theatrical elegance, into last wills and sonnets. It is the material out of which men make laws,

deify the blue above, and win their mistresses. It is the greatest man-made power under the heavens, and without a mastery of it, one proceeds at the risk of all good things, at the risk of the grand assumption that life is precious.

The importance of stuttering in a glib world is thereby asserted. It is to be multiplied by seven digits, for in America alone there are over a million stutterers. As one of them, I observe with some dismay that no one from their number has ever spoken for them "to the Spartans," has ever told their story of lonely humor and unsuspected pathos. It is a story of twisted meanings, unsurmised by the world at large, for no one has ever candidly admitted what it means to stutter.

I shall try, then, to tell what it means to stutter, speaking always from my own point of view. Beyond that I cannot go with certainty, and I shall not risk adding to the reams of nonsense that have been written about stuttering. At the age of five I began to stutter, for no apparent reason, and I have persisted in the defect up to the present time. Viewing that period, I shall try to describe the influence that stuttering has had on the development of my personality, my ambitions, my fundamental attitudes towards life. The period with which I shall deal is, by the way, essentially a unit, for

it has approximately culminated, in recent months, in an emancipation from the misery of a stumbling tongue. I stutter less than formerly, and the malady has all but lost its terror for me. I trust that the reasons for this will become apparent in the pages that follow.

I am not, however, going to write a treatise primarily on the cause and cure of stuttering. My purpose is to make an admission, a confession, a bald statement of subjective fact, for what it might be worth. It will be worth, I trust, added exertion in the realms of science and human understanding.

In describing my own case, I shall aim always at relevancy. It will be necessary in the chapters which follow to divulge data of a very personal nature; assuredly it will not be intended as an act of deliberate egotism, nor even of conscious self-defense. The doing of it will depend upon a certain amount of scientific sincerity, which will not, I hope, be mistaken for personal indiscretion.

An investigation of my family history reveals a record of rather ordinary persons and events. No significant cases of mental or nervous disease are evident; so far as general physical health is concerned, both the paternal and maternal lines have been characteristically sound. There have been no cases of markedly low intelligence, and, aside

from a maternal grandfather who wrote poetry and a paternal grand-cousin who was a Swedish baron, there appears to be nothing exceptional to a general well-being and mediocre achievement. Among my forebears there were apparently no stutterers; in fact, there was an occasional singer or public speaker of local reputation.

At birth, I was a normally healthful and sound twelve-pound baby, the sixth child of the family and six years the junior of my nearest sister. The age of my mother at that time was forty years, of my father forty-five years. Besides the sister aged six, I had another sister, aged twelve, and three brothers of the ages eight, ten, and fourteen respectively. Physically and mentally, there was nothing unusual about any of them, except a general level of intelligence which I may describe, without bias, as being rather above average. Being well nourished and well treated generally, I developed without arousing the least alarm.

I have cited enough, I believe, to indicate what is pertinent: that my heredity and birth were in no way spectacular and prove little so far as my speech defect is concerned, save that I entered the world normally healthful and sound.

Likewise, my home life was not extraordinary in any striking sense. My father was, and still is, a

successful farmer and cattleman and provided well for his family; we had no material wants and not a few of those things which, in rural sections, are considered luxuries.

In my father's home, I found the pioneer mind, with its pragmatic obsession, its preoccupation with immediate things, its industrial practicality. But if my father's home was not urbane, it at least had in it that which suggested the breadth and variety of the world's things to the extent that the surrounding skyline proved not insurmountable to my imagination. The heritage of the Old World had filtered into my father's library, and there, in the large volumes on the history of the world and in the biographies of great men, I found fascination. Having had leisure thrust upon him by a serious injury, my father resorted to the reading of those books, and assigned himself the pleasant task of adding to their number by the collection of volumes, chiefly concerned with biography and history. He read, of course, from the point of view of one who had long engaged in the American struggle, and he enjoyed most those books which lent support to his long-established opinions. If he was drawn, at times, into alcoves where nothing but beauty and the intangible essence of life were to be enjoyed, he returned always to that more imposing world which

surrounded him and of which he was a part. He lived in that world, according to principles designed for it, regardless of the books he read.

But I was young. I had no fear of the poorhouse; my father's integrity had served to cast me up high and dry on the white beach of plenty. I read and I observed generally from the point of view of a boy becoming aware that the world is made up of various things, none of them to be cast aside with too hasty disdain. During my first four years, nothing had occurred in my life that was significant enough to be recorded, or even preserved in the family gossip, which leaves me with the conclusion that I developed during those highly important formative years in a normal way—that is, in the conventional way. I was about four years old when my father took me with him into the library. So far as my young mind could comprehend what I encountered there, I acquired a pure knowledge more or less, and I have never forgotten that it fascinated me as such. In a rough way, I pieced together the history of the Western World, a superb story for a child to learn and one to set him dreaming. I could look to the horizon around my father's farm, and know that beyond that and far beyond that, there were people like the people I knew, and others perhaps not like the people I knew; and there were "great men"

welding empires, as my father's oft-repeated ringing phrase would have it.

It was important. For, if, a few years later, my energies were directed more and more away from the library, and I was brought more into contact with prevalent practicality, always I retained the thought that perhaps somewhere things were different—and maybe better. My imagination and curiosity had been aroused once and for all. I was to be haunted by the suspicion that there was to be always another side to any question; and that suspicion was to give rise to a kind of idealism, an opposition to that utilitarianism rampant which involves the pragmatic acceptance of situations as they are found at any given moment.

To the extent that household tradition can be respected, it can be said that up to the age of five, my speech was relatively clear and fluent. At its first appearance, the stuttering was slight enough to be regarded with the rather hopeful indifference of my parents. Apparently nothing was done about it, save that the family physician was casually consulted with the result that he recommended I be not made an object of laughter and abuse. The recommendation was whole-heartedly respected by my family, and I was not made to feel that my stuttering was of any significance.

I recall nothing whatever concerning my early experiences as a stutterer. What memories of the period I retain are concerned with other matters. So far as my recollection goes, therefore, an inquiry into the first cause of my stuttering brings no fruit. Apparently it could be attributed to no physical illness or weakness, nor to any emotional shock. In fact, about two years ago I underwent a searching psychological analysis for the express purpose of unearthing any emotional disturbances, any repressed complexes, which might have been at the root of my difficulty. Nothing of the sort was found. It must be understood that this analysis was thorough; it was carried on for about a year, and was terminated only when it had been shown to be, by every psychoanalytic standard, ineffectual.

My father has offered the explanation that when I began to stutter I was "thinking ahead of my speech." His supposition amounted to this, that my ability to think words had developed faster than my ability to say words. It does seem to be true that certain cases of stuttering might be explained on some such basis; and stutterers who are of such a type often "grow out of it." They grow out of it, because the ability to speak ultimately catches up with the ability to think. In my case, however, such an explanation proved to be wrong. I did not grow

out of it; I got worse. Certainly I developed a considerable vocabulary at quite an early age; I had the verbal material with which to express myself. Moreover, they are not big or long words that cause me most difficulty, for I stutter on all words, simple and complex.

My mother explained my stuttering by saying that it was a "kind of nervousness." That, of course, means very little. It is an explanation commonly found among parents of stuttering children. The grimaces in the face and the movements of the jaws and tongue in stuttering, however, are not to be confused with the fidgety movements in cases of nervous instability. If there is nervous instability in the stutterer, it will no doubt tend to increase the stuttering to the extent that it tends to increase the lack of muscular control. That certainly does not mean that stuttering is "nervousness."

I was told, also, that I stuttered because I was afraid I would stutter. I shall have more to say about that theory in the next chapter. An older brother was fond of the notion that I stuttered because I really wanted to. It just simply isn't true. Pavlov, in working with the salivary reflexes in dogs, has shown that desire has very little to do with the reflex activity. A large flow of saliva can be brought about where there is no desire for food, and a small

flow can be brought about where there is a strong desire for food. The analogy can be almost directly applied to the matter of stuttering. Everyday observation of stutterers brings one to the conclusion that stuttering occurs whether the stutterer wants to have difficulty, does not want to, or does not care one way or the other. One of the most severe cases of stuttering I ever knew was that of a boy who simply did not care whether he stuttered or not. As a rule, stutterers do not want to stutter. Their desires, however, have very little to do with it—if my own experience is typical.

I am much interested in pointing out the fact that no satisfactory explanation was offered regarding the onset of my difficulty. I am interested, because I have found it true that parents, including my own, generally have quite definite explanations of such matters. Much damage is done by such dogmatism on the part of parents, or on the part of teachers. I have heard of one teacher who concluded that by roundly scolding a certain student every time he stuttered, much benefit would be gained. Of course, the poor student stuttered more and more. But the self-satisfied teacher persisted in his ridiculous belief with the result that he probably caused serious damage in the young person's life. It would have been no more absurd for him to have taken a knife and

cut a slit in the student's tongue (a practice which was quite common not so many decades ago!). It is far better to admit ignorance where ignorance exists than to insist on knowledge where there is no knowledge. The least that can happen when parents insist that they know what is the matter with their stuttering children is that they delay in giving the matter over to expert examination by others or by themselves.

My memory of the period at which stuttering began touches almost exclusively on the fact that I spent a share of my time learning the fundamentals of the three R's, and that I enjoyed the time spent in that manner. Beyond that I must accept the family statement that I was an active youngster with an agreeable disposition; the latter is no doubt more or less true, for I cannot recall ever having been punished by my parents. That I was active is implied in the fact that, at the age of five, I was physically robust and had no record of illness. It is quite certain that a large part of the time I had played alone, my youngest sister being six years older than myself. A neighbor boy of my own age lived about a half mile away, so that it was seldom that we played together. By virtue of this semi-solitary play life, not only were certain social habits held in abeyance perhaps, but certain unsocial ones

were begun. Having at a very early age acquired the truth that I could play enjoyably by myself, both outdoors and in the library, I was prepared to acquire a degree of personal independence, though not disdain of fellowship necessarily. I was simply made unmistakably aware of myself as an individual, something distinctly apart from other people although similar to them. It might have been true that my speech defect tended to increase this individualism.

At the age of six years, I was entered in the first grade of the public school in the little town of Roxbury, two miles from my home. Roxbury was a village of one hundred rurally-minded inhabitants. So far as I know, it has had a population of about a hundred ever since a few years after its founding in 1872; it still has a population of about a hundred. They are more or less the same one hundred, either actually or by heredity. The town is still ten miles from the nearest railroad and the nearest highway. Situated at a crossroads in a little basin, with the encircling skyline quite like the rim of a saucer, it has enjoyed a long record of peace and quiet. At one time some of the less ethical cowboys rode crazily down the wind and pulled a trigger here and there, and occasionally a prairie fire would make the night hideous and the day hell. There were Indians once

in the basin. But all that was long ago and might be almost forgotten to-day, were it not for the fact that the oldest settlers tell certain stories over and over through their beards.

I enjoyed going to school. I studied and played eagerly. For about a year I had been stuttering slightly, but in school, as at home, nobody apparently paid much attention to my speech defect. While I was still in the first grade, my teacher intended, I was told, to advance me at once to the second grade; she later decided not to do that because of my stuttering. This occasioned my first significant realization of stuttering as a part of myself. I was given to understand that it was a handicap, an understanding, by the way, which circumstances were never to repudiate. I can recall one or two vague moments when, after that incident, I was childishly and bewilderingly sad because I could not talk like other boys and girls; I went to my mother once or twice and cried about it, and she did more for me than she ever suspected, simply by being kindly. For the most part, however, I must not have been moved by the matter to anything like philosophical seriousness. I studied hard and played zestfully with the other boys and girls, and was happy. My playmates never ridiculed me when I stuttered, and frequently, when I blocked on a

word, some one of them would say it for me, and so I chatted with them almost on even terms. My teacher treated me with uncanny understanding and was chiefly responsible for the attitude of the pupils toward my defect. I shall always be grateful to her.

During the early years of my school life my good health and contentment continued. It might well have been true that my health and my capacity for achieving a degree of superiority both on the playground and in the classroom went a long way toward rendering me insensitive to my defect; for, while stuttering itself must have been painful, life on the whole was pleasant. Having grown somewhat older, I was allowed, during the summer months, more liberty to play with the neighbor boy. He was a good playmate and perfectly tolerant of my stuttering, although he is connected with my earliest memories of embarrassment from my faulty speech. No doubt it tended to make me feel inferior to him—and inferior for no other reason than that I stuttered. Perhaps by the time I was eight years old, this general attitude on my part had become involved in the run of my associations with other children. As a result of experience, I gradually came to regard my stuttering as something to be concealed or somehow shorn of its odious importance. I was becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that whatever

favor I enjoyed among my friends, I gained chiefly from my performances on the playground, a rather consistent geniality, and my position at or near the head of my class. Consequently, I came to deliberately cultivate my abilities in athletic and scholarly lines, and I heeded the teaching received at home and at school and in everyday association with my young fellows to the effect that the ultimate line of least resistance is that of good-natured behavior. Life did not teach me to believe that it was desirable to make enemies.

Because my stuttering forced me—and what I found in my father's library encouraged me—to think the world might have been different, I began early to dream after a certain fashion. Of most importance perhaps, I dreamed of what I might become, and I laid the foundations of that Utopia which was to become increasingly magnificent, in which I should not stutter and in which I should be happy in the things I could do—better than others could do them.

One of the significant things I would do in Utopia would be to write. At that early age, I realized that I could express more adequately in writing that which I could express only haltingly by word of mouth. So long as the stuttering would persist, I would defeat its damaging purpose. My designs

bear shades of Demosthenes, that ancient hero of all stutterers, who fought against his defective speech until he had become the greatest orator in Athens! The restraint placed on my capacity for expression only served to concentrate and intensify the desire for expression. I tried to encourage my tongue by placing pebbles under it, as did Demosthenes, but the attempt was futile; at the age of eight I knew that I wanted to be a writer, the greater the better, and all these years I have persisted in that desire—with varying and slight degrees of literary success, but with a saving personal gratification.

These five lines of development which I have sketched—scholarship, athletics, Utopia-building, writing, and geniality—grew largely out of my speech defect, or were, at any rate, greatly affected by it. In fact, every ambition I have ever entertained, as well as every aversion, has sprung to a large degree from my stuttering. It must not be overlooked, of course, that any one of them might have been rather more than implicitly involved in my pre-stuttering development; but only to the extent that non-stuttering conditions would have accounted for them are they in a limited sense irrelevant to this study.

Moreover, quite regardless of how these various tendencies and ambitions came into being, it is the

attitude toward them which stuttering has taught me to assume that is of fundamental importance. For example, although I might have become a basketball player even had I been as glib as a train-caller, certain it is that I regarded basketball ability in a different light than did my teammates in high school. Although I had not stuttered, I might have emerged from my father's library with scholarly and literary inclinations, but I should not have regarded them as in any degree compensatory for a defect in speech. The imperative fact is that I have considered my abilities in these lines as compensations for my inability to express myself adequately in speech. Not only, then, as a human being, but also as a student, a writer, an athlete, a dreamer, a social creature, I have received the impress of stuttering; and I think I am justified in saying that largely because I have stuttered I am a particular kind of person.

If I did not think this fact were important to anybody but myself, I should immediately destroy these pages and write no more. But I know there are millions of stutterers. They have parents and teachers, sisters and brothers and friends who try from a rather hopelessly external point of view to understand them, no doubt. And there are stutterers who are bewildered by their own predicament. Even the speech pathologists are not certain what a speech

defect means to the individual suffering from it, and if they knew their work could be significantly expanded. If only one stutterer will be rather shamelessly frank and explain what stuttering seems to constitute as a fact of life, I believe it inevitable that considerable benefit will be gained. And that is why I am doing a task that is to me at once unpleasant and gratifying.

CHAPTER II

THE FACTS IN GENERAL

BECAUSE stuttering is little understood, I find it necessary, at this point, to make a few general statements concerning the nature of stuttering. By doing so I hope to describe the stutterer as a creature of everyday life. He is not to be thought of as a hospital patient or a laboratory subject; he is a human being who walks the streets, works, plays, and looks longingly into bakery windows like other people. What happens to him as he stands in front of the ticket office and gasps and blinks and chokes? What does he feel, and what fills his thoughts—of which the amused bystander is unknowing?

As a stutterer, I experience a rather consistent bodily and mental state. The defect does not exist merely as an obvious inability to express myself adequately in speech; it involves a general complicated bodily tenseness as well, and a mental uneasiness, a real fear, which is apparent, as a rule, in my halting, shrinking manner of expressing myself, my thoughts, my emotions. I tend to hold myself in because I am afraid I shall stutter.

I am fully aware that the general opinion is quite to the contrary: that I stutter because I hold myself in. My most frank study of myself, however, leads me to oppose that superficial observation; it clearly bears out that stuttering comes first, and then the holding in, the shyness, the emotional chaos follows as an effect and not as a cause. The emotional morbidities constitute a reaction on the part of myself, a stutterer, to the social situations—and this stuttering organism, with its muscular tensions, reacts more vigorously to some situations than to others. Stuttering, if my self-analysis is to be relied upon, is not a neurosis; a neurosis may, however, develop out of the fact that a glib society places a severe burden on the stuttering individual.

This holding myself in, this shrinking, gives a genuine sensation, an unpleasant sensation. Physiologically, it amounts to a heightening of the muscle tonus, apparently throughout the body. It is an attribute of fear, a gesture of defense. In more severe instances of stuttering, or anticipation of stuttering, I have become aware of an increased rate of heart beat, heightened blood pressure, flushing, perspiration, and trembling. The mental accompaniments have been chiefly dread, anguish, and a longing to escape, to vanish from the sight of those about me. I have felt weak, pathetically mortified,

and incapable of speaking. At times I have responded to the restraint which stuttering imposes upon me, by general rage, with its physiological symptoms and its so-called mental flurry and decreased consciousness or awareness. As I look back, after having known a considerable number of other stutterers, I realize that my own defect was severe. Indeed, I have in my possession an objective record, made in the Iowa Speech Clinic Laboratories, which shows that I attempted, for nineteen seconds, to speak while drawing air *into* the lungs. It is only to be expected that I should respond to such depressing restraint with a whole repertory of embarrassment, anger, despair, rage-like effort, and a general feeling of futility. I should like to add at this point that the above describes something like what the stutterer is subjected to, for example, when a teacher calls on him for an oral recitation in the classroom!

Chiefly by means of introspection and retrospection, but also by reference to objective findings, I shall try to make this condition which the stuttering organism experiences comprehensible in detail. I shall try to picture it as the real, everyday thing that it is. No known laboratory instrument can make poignantly real the experiences of the stutterer by giving them the peculiar descriptive terms which

they conjure up in his own consciousness, and while I shall add practically nothing to what is known of the anatomy, the neurology, and the physiology of speech, I shall lay bare and make vivid those physical and mental states in the stutterer with which the speech pathologist, the teacher, the social worker, and the parent must be concerned.

The occurrence of stuttering is determined not so much by the particular sounds or sound combinations met with in a particular location in a sentence, but more by the social situation in which speech is attempted. That is, the stuttering organism responds more vigorously to certain situations than to others. When alone I experience the least difficulty in talking, but I do stutter some, and on practically all possible sounds. Before a group, as in a classroom, or in a drawing room, I have, as a rule, my most severe stuttering—and no sounds are excepted. I may add that pronouncing my own name, or the name of my home town, making formal or even informal introductions, and other tasks demanding definite articulations—without allowing the possibility of substituting one word or sound for another —present generally the most persistent and the most embarrassing difficulty.

Certain writers who have an eye for the obvious have attempted to explain the above facts, which

seem to be rather common among stutterers generally, by concluding that stuttering is a symptom of fear. When the stutterer is afraid of stuttering, he will stutter; when he thinks he can talk, he can talk. So they say. The falsity of such a view becomes plain to me, when I attempt to understand the onset of my defect, which I touched upon in the preceding chapter. It is pertinent here, however, to point out the fact that the fear with which the stutterer responds to the task of addressing an audience is quite identical with the fear with which the normal speaker responds to the same situation. And the reason why the normal speaker does not stutter at such a time is merely that he is not a stutterer! On the one hand, the stutterer responds to an audience as a normal human being who is afraid of an audience of other human beings; on the other hand, he responds as a stutterer who stutters to an audience or to a maiden aunt or even to himself. The stuttering and the fear appear together, it seems to me, as two quite distinct responses, which, it is true, have become closely associated through experience and might easily be confused by the observer. Insofar as they may be related integrally to each other, it appears more logical to assume that the stuttering comes first, the fear second.

Another interesting and important fact is that the

tendency to stutter may be more pronounced at one time than at another, in social situations by and large. Variation in the bodily and mental state characteristic of stuttering occurs with almost periodic regularity, the periodic wave enduring from two to three weeks. Concerning the factors responsible for this periodicity, I can only suggest presumptions. There seems to be some evidence that general bodily tone in each of us is periodically depressed or enlivened. It may not be a spurious observation that periodicity is a law of all nature. Such statements are more descriptive than explanatory, with reference to my particular case, unless it be inferred that I am no exception to a widespread rule, the generality of the phenomenon being in part an explanation of the individual case. At any rate, loss of sleep, fatigue, and worry, while influencing to a degree the tendency to stutter, do not account wholly for periodic fluctuations in that tendency. A separate and important problem of research is implied.

This periodicity does not indicate that stuttering is a so-called "mental" defect. There seems to be periodicity in mental states as much as in anything else, but it would be no more logical to suppose that fluctuations in the severity of stuttering are dependent on fluctuations in, say, self-confidence—whatever that is—than it would be to suppose they were

dependent on fluctuations in metabolic rate. The latter, indeed, would be more logical. Since we are only guessing anyway, a rather formidable guess would be that variations in both self-confidence and stuttering were dependent on variations in metabolic rate. My point is that the notion that stuttering is a symptom of mental states rests on an extremely rickety foundation. One might select off-hand any number of other guesses that are superior to it, other guesses, moreover, which are themselves relatively worthless.

It is necessary, I think, to introduce two other facts at this point, although I shall develop them more fully in later pages. The one I have hinted above, that stuttering is a constant, though variable, factor, and persists subjectively as the anticipation that difficulty will be encountered whenever speech may be attempted, the dread awareness of stuttering as a fact of life. This is a genuine and analyzable sensation. The stutterer's ironic gag, "I don't always stutter—only when I talk," is not really true, provided my own experience is typical. He is a stutterer first, last, and always, whether attempting speech or not. Moreover, neither logic nor my experience will permit me to assume that this fear, now so important, was the first cause of my speech defect. I am certain it did not exist until it arose

as my reaction to my own difficulty in speaking. We may presume that I was called upon to speak, and I stuttered. The next time I was called upon to speak, I was afraid I should stutter. A conditioned response was thus simply set up (as regards the fear), and it was subsequently strengthened through exercise of it until it became an integral part of myself. The stuttering and the fear of stuttering (as distinguished from the fear of anything else) worked hand in hand to my disadvantage. Had my parents or my teachers been aware of that fact, and had they combated by sound mental hygiene the conditioning of that fear response in its early stages, no doubt my stuttering would have been robbed of one of its strongest allies. This fear of stuttering consists chiefly in the anticipation of difficulty, and it arises from the fact that stuttering has been known to occur before. It does not cause stuttering; rather, it is caused by stuttering that has occurred in the past. It is like expecting an apple to fall from the tree, because apples have been known to fall. One's expectation of such an occurrence does not bring the occurrence to pass; but the occurrence does come to pass—and then the expectation is justified.

The other fact has to do with the practice generally known as substitution. Instead of attempting

to say a word with which I feel I shall experience difficulty, I commonly substitute another word—or phrase, or sentence—which will convey approximately the same meaning. The result is that my speech defect remains relatively concealed from the casual observation of other people and that I mutilate more or less the quality of my verbal expression. I scarcely ever say anything in just the way I intend to say it; it is very annoying. My consolation is that a certain end is partially gained; I succeed in making my defect less obvious to others. Also, it has facilitated the acquisition of a larger vocabulary than I should have acquired otherwise.

I anticipate stuttering on a particular word from one to six words in advance, and immediately provide for the substitution of some other word or phrase. This anticipation is a function of the fear of stuttering, which, in turn, arises from my knowledge of the fact that stuttering has occurred in the past, under like circumstances. The factors, therefore, which cause it to arise may be found in the social situation, my state of fatigue or excitement, and other physical and mental conditions. On the whole, it is impartial to particular sounds; but certain special cases are exceptional to this rule. Those words which any polite, and more or less illusioned, person uses with decorous hesitancy have a tendency

to aggravate my difficulty—and they often render substitution glaringly obvious.

Substitution, however, while being rather a common practice, at least with myself, is neither always effective nor is it to be employed in anything like every case. Deficiency of vocabulary or the fact that some words cannot be replaced in a particular context often account for substitution being neglected. Moreover, it is frequently true that the substituted word is one on which I anticipate stuttering, and in such cases, unless a secondary substitution is instantly resorted to, stuttering may result. At all events, substitution is a task, an added burden from which the normal speaker is happily free. At those times when it leads me to make awkward or even inaccurate statements and thus makes me appear more stupid than I believe myself to be, it is a source of grief and embarrassment.

I have many other devices besides substitution which I employ for the purpose of avoiding stuttering; I wish to conceal my defect from observers and also to spare myself the struggle with a tongue running amuck. But I do not mean to leave the impression that these devices are sufficient to make my stuttering a defect of no importance. There are times when all the devices I can muster are of no avail. I have been forced into silence many times.

On more than one occasion I have started to tell a story only to find it impossible to complete it. For many years I was even a believer in the idea that as I thought so was I; I told myself repeatedly that I did not stutter; I determined that I would talk fluently. With clenched fists I determined. And I stuttered just the same.

These few facts which I have briefly stated should be borne in mind as pertinent to practically any consideration of specific phases of the stuttering process. They will account, in part, for exceptions to many apparent rules, and they will throw a degree of light on many problems.

CHAPTER III

A PLEASANT DISPOSITION

IF I strike back to about 1914, when I was eight years old, I find the beginnings of material significant for recollection in this study. With this approximate time, memory becomes more generous and gives me reason to say that at the age of eight I was sufficiently aware of my stuttering to attempt deliberate adaptations in allowance of it. I was beginning to exercise self-restraint in situations bearing the least formality. Polite company had the faculty of making me feel inferior to a quite unwarranted degree, for my training had impressed upon me the apparent fact that in order to be polite certain rather rigid verbal conventions were to be observed. One was expected to say certain things at certain times; I couldn't do that without making myself ludicrously conspicuous, without blubbering and blushing and embarrassing myself and those others with whom I might be trying, with a futility almost rude, to converse. If I said nothing, I supposed that I was considered a dunce, and I did not relish that. Consequently, I came to make it a point

to avoid such circumstances as much as possible. When forced into them, I confined my speaking to the fewest words expediency would allow, and to the extent that it was necessary and possible I employed the indirect and awkward technique which I have referred to as substitution.

So it happened that I began the habit, which I have never entirely relinquished, of sitting by and listening and quietly observing while others talk among themselves. It is really a matter of skill, this withdrawing from conversation; it must be done in an inoffensive manner or it is taken to indicate aloofness, but when done well it is highly successful as a manner of human association. I have been invited repeatedly to homes where I have done nothing but lounge in comfortable chairs, say nothing, and give mute evidence that I was enjoying myself! Also, if done in a blundering manner, this silent attendance in the midst of conversation tends to brand one with the stigmata of stupidity, but if one keeps the right expression on the face and the right sparkle in the eye, no such dire consequence need occur. As a matter of fact, I know that on innumerable occasions, a real ignorance on my part has been mistaken for knowledge which, so it was presumed, I did not care to divulge. But I always feel shaky as I sit thus silently in the presence of

others; I have gone through whole evenings with the constant dread that some one would address a question to me, and that I should stutter in my reply, and the dread has been justified so frequently that I have been rendered on the whole an unwilling guest. The late improvement of my speech has mitigated this condition, however.

At an early age, then, I discovered my preference for informal companions and informal social situations. In the midst of a boisterous company, I was able to produce an occasional remark with enough wit to win me respect, or even popularity. I learned that deliberate articulation, the forming of spoken sounds by consciously placing the articulatory mechanism (of which I shall say more in the final chapter), was less obvious when matters were diverting—when I could begin a remark while the attention of the group was focused elsewhere than on myself. Moreover, I discovered that laughter itself was an aid in speaking; when suddenly blocked on a word, I could feign laughter—all at once I could pretend to be reimpressed by the extreme funniness of the current antics. Thus I gave myself the opportunity to relax my tense body, to regain control of my speech mechanism and to go ahead with my remark without stuttering. In brief, it was an advantage to be at ease in order that my higher neural

centers might function with the least disturbance. Besides, brevity is the soul of wit, and I found it less difficult to speak briefly than at length.

It was advantageous, therefore, to encourage humor all about me. I consciously tried to make situations appear funny whether they were or not, and usually I succeeded. This, too, became a skill with me. Attempted with a wrong technique, it would have made me look silly; but attempted with the manner I developed, it converted me into a jolly good fellow. I laughed loud and long at my friends' attempts at wit, and they generally took my reaction to be complimentary, and were themselves convinced of their own brilliance. Or, again, I turned their remarks into humorous significance by my own wry comments, and provoked their laughter, which pleased them. Directing my friends' attention to incongruous or otherwise laughable aspects of the environment served to gain me the same end. It is significant that in my first literary efforts, I aspired to be a humorist, and that I read the writings of Ring Lardner, George Ade, and others of their bent, with a studious interest.

Furthermore, in a boisterous crowd, applause is to be won not infrequently by non-verbal antics. I made the most of this fact—for a man will inflate his ego in one way or another! As Shakespeare took

his cue from the loud guffaw of the pit, so I took my cue from the loud guffaw of my village companions. They came to observe that I was "quite a clown," and I certainly did not resent it. Not that I considered it a compliment either, but I simply realized the value of their opinion. I was talented in their eyes, and it was a pleasure to be thought of as talented.

I am convinced that there is an additional, and more subtle, explanation of this clowning, boisterous, humorous conduct on my part. It is true absolutely that it made speaking easier, and it was ostensibly for that very substantial reason that I cultivated it. But there was probably another reason, of which it appears I was unknowing at the time. It is said that Lincoln laughed sometimes when the circumstances did not seem to warrant it, and that he explained by saying that if he didn't laugh he would have to weep—and he would rather laugh. Every psychologist is, of course, familiar with this device of rationalization and repression. I know that back there, when I was eight, nine, ten, eleven years old, I did weep on occasion, and weep bitterly. I was sad sometimes and despairing. When you consider that my means of self-expression were functioning rather painfully under a handicap, that my speech was abnormally restrained; when you consider fur-

ther that speech is the capacity a man has to symbolize himself in sound and to translate himself into the understanding of others, perhaps you can appreciate that I had reason for moments of despondency. But the healthy child will not cherish despondent moods; he will do all that he can to repress them, although he may not be aware that he is repressing anything. I simply did quite the normal thing under the circumstances; and in my case, it took a considerable amount of effort, a good deal of laughter and clowning, to make me forget that I could weep and be sad. I know that at a later age I became aware that my deeper attitude was one of rebellion, a rather bitter rebellion against my stuttering and a society that did not, with any great understanding, take my stuttering into account. I have no good reason to doubt that when I was rather young I had a deep resentment. My hilarity was, for one purpose, a smoke-screen, behind which I concealed my more unpleasant qualities. That smoke-screen made it possible for me to move through those years with a minimum of social friction, and is to be explained, in part at least, as a device of repression.

At any rate, having found that I could be taken for a good fellow, I eagerly played the part. It was not enough to be a clown and a boisterous wit; that in itself, of course, constituted no mean achievement

in the minds of my village friends, but it was necessary, also, to have an audience, to fondle that audience, and to keep it well-disposed toward me. The schoolboys—more so than the girls—and the men who frequented the stores, the barber shop, the creamery, made up the greater part of my public. I treated them always with deference, was considerate of their moods and wishes, gentle in my intimate contacts with them, and took a discreet and sincere personal interest in their not-too-private affairs. They could trust me with their secrets, and whether they trusted me or not, I never scandalized any of them. Now and then I worked a problem or parsed a sentence for a fellow pupil in distress. I was slow to take offense and cautious to avoid giving it; if apology was in order, I found it easy to render. Among the girls, my stuttering made me very shy; I could not be boisterous with them, and, more or less as a consequence, I treated them with respect.

It may seem that I have too good an opinion of myself! You will observe that, the teaching of parents and teacher aside, I was a young pragmatist, and with a vengeance. The plain fact is that experience taught me to be, in my associations with others, as unselfish as possible. I found it an extremely beneficial manner. No doubt, I was genuinely sincere; probably I had a real human interest

in my friends, but it seems to me now that my motives were ulterior, though perfectly justifiable. Every man chooses his own way to get along in the world. In spite of Voltaire's jest, one must live; it is the nature of a healthy man to think that he must live—he thrills with the epic song of the conqueror. I should have found conditions unbearably severe had I struck a bluntly selfish, resentful pose; I should only have added to the undeniable handicap of stuttering the further handicap of social maladjustment. I cannot disown the belief that I exercised more common sense than anything one could call innate benevolence. Experience and observation—allowing for the prejudice that experience has given me—have taught me to think that the capacity which makes man moral or gentle is the same capacity that prompts him to come in out of the rain. It has been called intelligence, or rather intelligence is the name that has been given to that capacity. Such an assertion, attempting to stand without the aid of a dialectic, will elicit almost any sort of a reaction on the part of the reader—depending more or less on the books he has read and the people he has known, as well as on the nature of his parents.

But I am not going to unwind a dialectic. It is not my purpose to write a treatise on the correlation

between intelligence, trial-and-error experience, and one's degree of morality and gentleness. I simply offer the sincere explanation that my joviality, good nature, and whatever degree of unselfishness I revealed constituted a practical adaptation to a particular kind of situation. Subsequently, I was able to do what a great number of people do; I was able to rationalize to the effect that it is right and proper to be moral and considerate of one's fellows. Why not? Hadn't I found it advantageous? And didn't all the best people agree with me?—notwithstanding that perhaps they offered a more abstract defense of morality and goodness.

At all events, my genial disposition remained for the most part intact and impartial for many years. For the sake of unity, the period beginning roughly with my nineteenth year is to be given over to a separate discussion, in later pages.

CHAPTER IV

SCHOLARSHIP

AT first, in my father's library, I found study a delight. I was drawn to it by my father's good sense and my own eager curiosity, and I came to enjoy learning as a kind of conquest. When I entered school, a stutterer, and found that by exerting myself a bit I could win a place at or near the head of my class, scholarly endeavor took on an added significance. If the other boys and girls could surpass me in the act of talking, I could surpass them in learning. The meaning of such a state of affairs was obvious, and I seized upon it at once

My teacher must have had an uncommonly good understanding of my situation. She gave me all the work I could do, created special assignments for me, and demanded in a pleasant way the best standard of work that I could maintain. Moreover, she had no hide-bound notions as to how a pupil should display the amount and thoroughness of his study; she excused me, for the most part, from oral recitation, and yet she taxed me with practically no extra written work. I recall that I had little trouble in spell-

ing, so far as speech difficulty was concerned; I also volunteered an occasional recitation in class, for at that time my stuttering had not yet become forbiddingly imposing. And in the doing of blackboard exercises, as well as in written examinations, I was, of course, on even terms with the other pupils. From these sources, then, and from competent general observation, my teacher was able to evaluate my class standing. The too widespread notion among school teachers that a stutterer—or any other kind of student—ought to be penalized so many points for his failure to recite adequately in an oral way appears to me to be sheer nonsense, and to indicate nothing so much as an inability or unwillingness on the part of the teachers to exercise reason in the matter. Had my teacher penalized me on the ground of my stuttering, I should probably have had little zest for study. As it was, I was offered a means of gaining a place in the school life which was in accordance with my natural ability. The justice of it brought out an avid response on my part.

The benefits of the reaction thus called forth cannot be overestimated. I was stimulated to study, to learn, to constantly enrich my mental life, whereas, by a stupid though perhaps equally conscientious teacher I might have been propelled to a distaste for such things. All too many stutterers have suffered

that very ill result of narrow-minded pedagogy. At the eighth-grade level, stutterers on the whole are retarded one grade; the significance of this fact is ominous. There is something criminal about it, in view of the fact that no investigations have reasonably indicated that the stutterers are less intelligent than non-stutterers.

There was, then, that very personal, almost private, satisfaction won by conscientious study. There was, in addition, the satisfaction of winning the respect of the other boys and girls, and of my teacher and parents, and to a less degree, of the village folk in general. That satisfaction was justified and needs no explanation. I sought to maintain it and increase it, and the effort involved has been a veritable tide of intellectual growth. There resulted the increasing understanding of things in general which tended to enhance my entire orientation.

Again, my motives must be examined, lest I leave the puerile impression that I was moved by a pure love of knowledge or truth or whatever the after-dinner speaker chooses to call it. No doubt I did love knowledge and found a pure joy and fascination in discovering new facts and new relationships between facts. But that is only what every student finds to a relative extent. It would explain nothing concerning stuttering. We must glance first at the

pleasure I found in my father's library before I began to stutter or before I apprehended that stuttering meant anything in particular. Undoubtedly at that time I laid the foundations for certain habits aimed at the pursuit of learning. I learned to read and to wonder at what I read. And I prepared the beginnings of a critical nature that drives one to books, to magazines, to all the sources of information.

When I began to stutter, then, I simply learned to apply previously acquired habits and aptitudes to a new purpose. Not able to talk adequately, I was forced to affirm what manner of stuff I was made of by some other means. In the first place, I had come to admire intelligence and learning, and to think of them as marks of superiority; I thought as highly of them as the so-called average person thinks of motor cars and pearl studs. There are, however, degrees in everything, and in Roxbury learning meant something quite different from what passes for learning in cultural centers. The sort of thing which I was taught to think of as intellectual superiority was of a relatively low standard. That is important in itself, but not as significant as the fact that I discovered that mental life was really useful to my purposes, and that I did carry on a certain amount of mental activity of any kind at all. I was intelligent enough to be respected for the distinction

I readily won in school and I found the distinction satisfying.

Also, I was keeping alive a longing to get on the other side of that basin horizon, where, so I understood, there existed a rather romantic world and one preferable by far to my father's farm and Roxbury. That longing, in fact, grew and grew, until by the time I had finished high school I had acquired a real dislike, almost a bitter hatred, for farm life. The village boy's dream of New York was not lost upon me. It seemed to me that there must be greater men somewhere else than the men I knew in the village; and it occurred to me that men who wanted to be superior in a great way did not belong in Roxbury. They didn't live there, and if they came, they left right away.

To have gained a deal of gratification, then, by using my mental ability as a weapon both of defense and aggression in Roxbury, does not mean that I rose like the eagle to glory. It means chiefly that I did defy the soil and that stupefying, fatal clutch the soil gets on a man to slow his stride and bend his shoulders, and all but bury him before he dies. It means that I found the monotony of the Kansas winds not at all satisfying. My mind developed enough to make me restless, and to give me imagination to realize that my restlessness was probably

justified. I was like a man who is just drunk enough to know that he is not quite sober, and just sober enough to know that he is not dead drunk.

As the world became larger to my understanding and richer in possibilities, any kind of superiority at Roxbury came to mean less and less. At the age of ten, for example, I had a real ambition to become a big league baseball player. At a somewhat later time, I dreamed of traveling to foreign lands. I would write great books, draw great pictures, and grow wiser and wiser and wiser! And so I studied, not only to proceed to the head of my class, but also to live the words that certain idol-worshipers have credited to Lincoln: "I will prepare and some day my chance will come."

Because I stuttered—largely. Granted that I had already formed studious inclinations before I began to stutter, it was the incapacity to assume easily a place among my fellows that drove me to exertion. Without exertion I was underrated, and no one can bear that indifferently. Without displaying a superiority gained by effort, I was an ordinary stutterer, a rather amusing sort of fellow, pathetic and not quite suited for the prevailing scheme of things. The thought of being considered in that light was utterly repulsive to me; my innate restlessness plus my experience and training forced me to believe that I

deserved better. My reaction was deliberate, almost desperate, ambition—an ambition that did not respect the encircling skyline and the standards of Roxbury. I studied, my effort was determinate, and as I gained the objectives which I set up from time to time, my effort did not diminish; the momentum of it carried over every point that might have been a stopping place. Senior-class president, president of the student body in high school, captain of the football team, of the basketball team, of the baseball team, editor of an experimental high school paper, and valedictorian were only symbols of something, symbols that meant increasingly less to me as I won them one by one. I anticipated those little triumphs, found them momentarily satisfying, but found them insufficient.

So long as I stuttered, the fight was unrelentingly at hand. The moment I let up in the struggle, I became nothing but a stutterer! Superiority was the one thing I had to gain; there was no alternative so long as my imagination prodded me and blood flowed through my veins. Unable to say what I wanted to say, unable to make myself adequately a human being by word of mouth, forced to the wall by an awkward tongue, I rebelled against the oppression. Self-expression, self-assertion, became my crying need, my dominating desire. Something tried to

crush me and I only fought back. Say that I exhibited an inferiority complex, or a superiority complex—depending on your point of view—but the terms are technical and unnecessary. A frank observation serves better, and gives more insight into the stutterer's thoughts and desires. It is less odious to the stutterer and more practical to the teacher, parent, or friend of the speech sufferer. Sum it up by saying that a man will fight for his rights; whether he fights by one means or another depends on his past experiences and more or less on his native stuff.

CHAPTER V

WRITING

AT an early age I found that I could express the quality and quantity of my mind rather satisfactorily by writing. Although I read books in my father's library and had a degree of admiration for the great men who wrote them, I have no good reason to assume that I should ever have had serious literary ambitions had my speech been fluent. I should not have found it necessary or convenient to write, and certainly the literary profession offers financial attractions of no great appeal to any one able to make money in a more luxurious manner. It is not enough to say that I was prompted by a love of art for art's sake. The term is always a half-truth; at best it is only a clew to the truth in any particular case. To say that a man loves art explains nothing; just as it explains nothing to say that a man loves a particular woman. It is necessary to explain why he must love at all, and to explain the meaning of that particular woman upon whom he has set his affections. An adequate analysis would probably result in a treatise on biology,

psychology, sociology, economics—and incidentally, love.

But whatever is true of writers in general is just now beside the point; it is beyond my present scope to meddle with the stock arguments in æsthetics. Only I want to make it clear, if I can, why I embraced the ambition to be a writer, in order to show to a degree why any stutterer might bend his abilities to a certain pattern.

The essence of the matter is that writing has been to me a compensation for stuttering. Why have not more stutterers hit upon the same compensation? Some of the reasons are obvious. The first is that not all stutterers, by any means, have intelligence enough for literary endeavor. Aside from that, the cultural tone of the typical American home almost prohibits the development of literary taste. The home library consists, as a rule, of almanacs and government bulletins, with a few elementary school textbooks and sentimental novels, and a kewpie doll thrown in for statuary. Table conversation seldom gets beyond neighborhood gossip. The radio brings jazz and the movies contribute sentimentality. The newspapers encourage superficiality. And the whole flowers into uncritical prejudice and poor grammar. Like Carlyle's genius, a literary artist in America is impossible until he appears.

If that is not reason enough, the public school furnishes more. Its entire personnel, both teachers and students, come from these homes, and the pragmatic obsession has won them over without a struggle. Grammar is made a chore, reading of all sorts is made a task instead of a pleasure—largely because the teachers think of it in that sense. The biographies of authors are made just as interesting as a list of obituaries; in fact, they are literally presented as obituaries, with conventional indifference and superficial examination. That Byron drank whisky is considered more important than that he wrote "Don Juan"; that Bryant was theoretically an upright citizen is counted as of more importance than that the bulk of his writings did not constitute rather good literature. Literature on the whole is relegated to the oblivion of impracticality; it is not comparable to tinkling money, and is therefore relatively worthless. For the exceptions to this state of affairs, let us be thankful, and deplore likewise that they are exceptions.

If that is still insufficient reason why more stutterers do not take up writing, the general cultural tone of American society will complete the picture, together with the fact that, financially, writing is a precarious profession. I have referred to this cultural tone as representing pragmatism rampant, the

preoccupation with immediate materialities. Idealism, one of the chief elements and purposes of literature, lies outside the realm of earthbound industrialism. The father groans and utters oaths and threats when his child begins to love *belles lettres*. Economic and social pressure bears heavily to direct the young person into other fields. Any one who takes up literary work in this country is not only educated in an unconventional way, but also he probably is, for some reason, very desperate.

That my desire to write grew out of my inability to speak will perhaps not appear, then, to be farfetched. It is true that few stutterers have followed the same line of development, but no doubt more stutterers would lean to the scrivener's profession, provided they had a fair degree of native intelligence, if those who have them in charge appreciated their situation enough to make writing a possibility for them.

From the first, it was my motive in writing, not the mere fact that I wrote, that was important to me. I looked on writing from a definite point of view. It struck me as being a ready means of expression, however indirect. In this connection, it is to be mentioned that the mere written word was a simple convenience in the doing of everyday tasks. In making purchases for my parents at the village

stores, I often wrote on a slip of paper the list of articles I had to buy, and I simply presented this slip to the clerk at the store. I did not always do this, but only when I anticipated more than usual difficulty in speaking. In seeking particular persons, I often presented a written slip at information bureaus or to floorwalkers. This technique proved useful in many other ways. But, as expediency so often is, this was essentially an escape, an admission of defeat, a truce with the difficulty. In the stutterer who does not realize that it is a gesture of escape, it might possibly set up detrimental habits. But, I think, to the one who knows and frankly admits to himself just what he is doing and why he is doing it, it is probably nothing more nor less than expedient.

So much for the written word as a simple convenience. In more subtle ways, it was a means of expression. Words, of course, are symbols of ourselves, our feelings and thoughts, and they represent to the external world the quality of our minds and the richness of our lives. The stutterer, displaying a dearth of words—and those given out stumblingly—must either be discounted in the opinions of his fellows, or he must resort to some other means of self-expression. To me, this other means was writing. It might have been painting or

music or woodwork, or anything else which serves to make one's personality apparent. But I was more familiar with books, and so I leaned in the direction of literature. I had heard many exciting stories of the pioneering days; they had particular significance for me, my father and mother having been pioneers. I heard other stories, too, and read others. I came to enjoy good stories. The next step was logically that of coming to realize the joy of writing stories, in one form or another. I made that step when I was about eight years old, just after I had read the last line in a juvenile book that consisted of the biography of a squirrel. Right then I decided to write a novel, and no sooner had I made the decision than I began to carry it out: "It was a cold morning in December. I was coasting down the creek bank. I coasted down one bank and up the other like a monkey going up a tree."

Nothing came of it—which is of no importance. The important fact was that I had started on a career; and since that time I have known quite definitely what I have wanted to do in this world. What I wrote in the three years that followed consisted chiefly of intended humor, but beyond that general description memory is vague with reference to it. I know that I persistently tried to be funny in writing. In a previous chapter I dealt with the develop-

ment of a pleasant disposition, and the fact that I found humor and geniality extremely advantageous. If humor was not present, I tried to create it—and so I aspired to be a humorist.

When I was eleven years old, however, the United States entered the World War, and my emotional reaction to that event was considerable; I was excited by the glory and touched by the pity of it. During the next two years I indulged in the composition of thoroughly bad war verse, and I dismissed the enemy with the following:

> For forty years the Germans drilled,
> For forty years they trained,
> They schemed and planned and plotted
> For forty years—in vain!

There were three more verses!

The writing of verse was a great satisfaction to me; it has remained a satisfaction to me in periods of unusual emotional intensity in my life. Even now, I write a poem occasionally—and whenever I do I can be reasonably certain that things are not going smoothly for me, or that I have been overjoyed. The significant thing is that the writing of poetry has always been a great relief for me in moments of stress. I have experienced it for the most part in times of severe loneliness—and the one thing more than any other that has made me intensely

lonely has been stuttering. I used to consider my poems achievements to the degree that I enjoyed showing them to my friends. It was a way of gaining that recognition which I was forced to seek by indirect routes. In later years, however, the writing of poetry has served chiefly to crystallize a random emotivity in myself, to bring it to a head, so to speak, and draw it outside myself—on the sheet of paper. That done, the equilibrium of my feelings is restored, and it is not so important that others see the poem itself. That others see the poem is also not so important for the reason that I have found quite ready means of winning an adequate recognition from my fellows, a satisfying place in society. By these remarks, I mean to indicate the relevancy of writing to my speech defect, and little aside from that.

That I tried to make my literary work serve me as a golden egg and a mark of distinction is indicated by the amusing fact that roughly between my twelfth and eighteenth years I received well over a hundred rejection slips from editors whom I assaulted with my jokes and skits and essays and verse. It appears, then, that to me writing meant something more than mere self-expression; my attitude was more aggressive than that. Writing, in all truth, meant a means of conquest not only of popular favor but of money

as well. To say that I loved art for art's sake would be a gross misstatement.

In the grade school and also in the high school, I frequently wrote pages of what was designed to be humor, and illustrated them with drawings. These I passed around among the other students, and in this way compensated for the fact that I could not make myself appear equally talented by word of mouth. Furthermore, having in this way established my reputation as a jolly good fellow, I was granted more readily the privilege of stuttering when I attempted to speak. As a general consequence, I, too, did not consider my stuttering as being so great a handicap as it might otherwise have been.

Writing provided me also with a manner of showing my ability as a student. I could bear the comparative obscurity into which I was thrust by the fact that I did not take part in oral recitations. I could bear it, because by my written work I could prove that my silence in class was not the symptom of stupidity. Often the papers I wrote were either read before the class, or even placed in school exhibits—in this way the odious purpose of my stuttering was defeated. I was not relegated to silence exactly, put out of sight, denied a hearing. I was rather allowed to be a part of the society in which I lived, and that was the end, largely, that I sought.

From the first, then, writing was a means of self-expression, not possible by word of mouth. It was also a manner of aggression, by which I sought to gain fellowship, money, and respect, all of which, of course, were not accessible to me by the spoken as by the written word. Essentially, writing has been and still is a compensation for my stuttering, and that is the crux of the matter.

It should be added at this point that although I gained a degree of respect from all quarters, because of my writing, my literary ambitions did run counter to my father's practicality. He was proud of the fact that I could write, but he saw in literature only an exercise of leisure and not at all a means of livelihood. The matter of making a living was to him of first importance, and he insisted that I train myself for a profitable profession—business or law or medicine. But to me, writing meant so much more than a source of income that I could not bear the thought of compromising, and because of the terrific impetus to write which I had to begin with, my father's opposition only appeared as another obstacle to overcome, and I met it with increased literary fervor. I had to. I couldn't quit writing. Doing that would have meant reverting to the level of a stutterer, and that was insufferable. The effort to achieve my ambition became, because of my father's

attitude, a rather more severe struggle, and one that was sometimes painful. It was only necessary, however, to show him that literature was a source of revenue; aside from that phase of the matter, he shared the joy of my literary efforts. One of the reasons for making these personal remarks is that they may be of some value to the fathers who have stuttering children.

Out of this encounter with the economic element that dominates the American mind, I acquired a dislike for it. It tended to exercise a restraint on me, and every student of human behavior knows that restraint of activity is the great cause of rage. It is seen best in children. As I came more and more to appreciate the value of art, I came more and more to resent the American business mind which stands in opposition to æsthetic values. It was not good for my congenial disposition; in fact, it tended to set up in me a rather unsocial attitude. When, at a later age—roughly my nineteenth year—I began to write stories and serious verse, a tone of bitterness crept into them. I developed an aspiration to be a critic; I saw that there was a great deal the matter with things in general.

It all goes back to my stuttering. But a discussion of my nineteenth year and after belongs to a later chapter.

CHAPTER VI

PLAY AND GAMES

AT an early age I learned that I could run as fast, and sometimes faster than the most able of my playfellows. Winning a footrace meant something very definite and very gratifying; it meant that in one instance, and in a manner unmistakable, I had asserted myself in a superior fashion. It meant also that my playmates respected that fact, and were likely to remember it later whenever my stumbling tongue tended to make me appear inferior. In no small sense I came to believe that more important than the ability to speak without stuttering was the ability to win a footrace.

(I want to throw out this idea here, for what it is worth: that before I ever began to stutter, experience perhaps had taught me to think of myself as being capable of notable achievements, relatively speaking, and that it was this feeling, upon which stuttering imposed itself as a damper, which acted to make my rebellion against stuttering as vindictive as it was. I have often wondered whether my reaction to an awkward tongue had not been different

and more sluggish, had I not been aroused in imagination and desire during those very early years. You have noticed that, as a stutterer, it has not been mere self-assertion that I have craved, it has been downright superiority; my acts, as well as my thoughts, have been genuinely and naïvely boastful. It appears to me that the desire for superiority could not have been manifest had the fundamental feeling of superiority not been underlying it. It all comes down to this, then: that the feeling of superiority, the sense of it, either arose out of experience before stuttering ever appeared, or it arose as a proud resentment toward the tendency of stuttering to make me seem inferior. Either I early acquired a sense of superiority, or I later had it thrust upon me. It might make considerable difference as regards the study of stuttering; I leave it to the speech pathologists. It is my province merely to tell what stuttering means to me; when I have admitted that I craved superiority and resented the apparent inferiority by which an awkward tongue tended to characterize me, I have said quite as much as frankness and certainty will allow. But I may be permitted, I think, to suggest as much as possible.)

At any rate, it was delightful to win footraces; it was especially delightful, since I felt an extraordinary need for winning something. Later, I derived

the same satisfaction from hitting home runs, scoring baskets and touchdowns and winning at tennis. And I did hit home runs, and do the other things, to the extent that I acquired a few medals and in my senior year in high school was elected captain of the baseball, basketball and football teams, and was high point man in the county basketball tournament. Whenever my athletic record was in sight, what did I care that I stuttered! To the villagers, I was not a stutterer; I was an athletic star. It made all the difference in the world. It kept me cheerful a large part of the time. Memory will always assert that one of the most important and enjoyable days of my life was the one on which our team played in a tournament basketball game in which I threw eleven baskets and we defeated our opponents 26 to 2. And that evening we played the team that won the championship; a few minutes before the end, our team got ahead because I threw a basket. The great crowd went wild; I can hear their crazy yelling yet! The players became tense with determination, and I doubt that I shall ever indulge in anything else quite as thrilling as that. I have almost forgotten that we finally lost that game. What does it matter? Did I care to remember in the heat of the game that I was a stutterer? Even now, when I remember it, I all but forget that I am

a stutterer. And there was the memorable baseball game, played for the county championship. I led off the eighth inning with a base hit, stole second, and scored to start a rally that won the game for our team—and the pandemonium of that huge crowd will never be lost upon me.

It was exceedingly important to me that I could do those things. Had I not been able to, I doubt not that the record of my life would read far differently and less enjoyably. Athletics have been, indeed, one of the most substantial compensations for my stuttering.

Besides the competitive athletics, I had another play activity which had its solid rewards for me. Solitary play began for me very early, because I was, by six years, the youngest child in the family. By the time I was ten years old, I had devised a number of absorbing games which I could play by myself.

One of these games I played by batting small rocks with a stick. By these means I played baseball, pitting Pittsburgh against Chicago, Boston against Cleveland—or Roxbury against McPherson, perhaps. Because I read the sport page of the daily paper religiously, I was able to reconstruct the teams for these games of my own. Tossing up a stone, I would swing at it, and if I missed it counted as a

strike; if I missed twice the batter was out. If I tossed the stone a bit to one side or the other, it was a ball; and two such wide tosses counted as a base on balls. If I knocked a stone over a certain landmark, it counted a two-base hit; if over another landmark, it counted a three-base hit, or a home run, and so on, until all the details of a baseball game had been provided for. And there I would play, often for two or three hours at a time, thrilling with one team and then with the other. Always I played myself, in imagination, on one team or the other—and it was remarkable how often I hit home runs or held the opponents scoreless by amazing pitching ability!

I had discovered, also, that the ancient game of tiddledywinks could be made to serve a modern purpose. With the bone buttons and the little glass cup, I devised a way to play baseball, basketball, and even football. (I had not yet become familiar with golf!) In this, as in the rock-batting games, I played myself on one team or the other, and it very frequently turned out that the team I was on came out the winner.

My mother usually had a goodly supply of used can rubbers—the kind that are used in canning fruit and vegetables. I soon discovered a delightful way to make use of them. There were various projections

from the walls in the kitchen and living room, such as nails on which calendars were suspended, little door knobs on the doors of the china cabinet; and there was one nail especially, driven at about a sixty-degree angle into the wall just above the swinging door between the kitchen and dining room, a nail which will ever be dear to my memory. I played basketball by throwing the can rubbers at these projections; if I was successful in ringing the nail or the door knob, it was counted a basket for the team which I happened to be representing at the time. I became rather skillful, especially at throwing at the nail above the door; I could ring it with a satisfying consistency from the middle of the room —and to an almost annoying degree, any one who used that door did so at the peril of having his hair roughed by falling can rubbers. In these games, too, I usually managed to make myself a star on one team or the other, and the pleasure of doing that was considerable.

These solitary games were important in a number of ways. They filled in periods which otherwise might have been lonely. They trained my mind in a particular kind of alertness and attention to details, and they involved a mental vigorousness. To a significant degree they took my attention away from the fact that I was a speech defective, by supplying

me with other matter more exciting and pleasing to think about.

Moreover, they reflected a wish for superiority in that I, or my team, was usually victorious. Consider that in playing these games, I withdrew into the little world that lies within myself; within this world there is public opinion as surely as there is in that bigger world outside, the point being that in my world I am my own public and the way I think of myself makes all the difference. If, therefore, I am there permitted to think to a less degree about myself as a person who can't talk without choking and gasping and making myself ridiculous, and to think more about myself as a hero in the games, the result is plainly invigorating. The effect of winning in those games in solitude was essentially the same as the effect of winning the games in which I played with my team in school.

Another phase is of significance. These games revealed a tendency to solitary activity, and a competency in it so far as immediate self-satisfaction was concerned. If the stutterer's reaction to society is to be examined, this little fact is not to be overlooked. I have noted among other people a widespread disinclination to be alone for any length of time. With myself, quite the reverse has been true for the greater part of my life. I enjoyed being

alone. I loved to get away from society, to retreat, to avoid social contacts in which my stuttering would serve to embarrass me. Being with other people involves the constant anticipation of the agony of stuttering; being alone involves a greater peace of mind, a pleasant tranquillity. The very bodily tension is decreased to the extent that a satisfying relaxation is possible. And because I have been rather forced, on innumerable occasions, to prefer solitude, I have devised means to utilize it with pleasure. Those solitary games served me in this way. Reading and writing have served the same end—but in solitary play the general significance is more strikingly apparent.

In my athletic activities, as in writing, I ran counter more or less to my father's practical attitude. Play, in any sense, was to him not a thing to be granted much importance and not a thing to be indulged in devotedly. Work always came first (for it must not be forgotten that my father enjoyed his work and the farm—as much as Hoffman ever enjoyed his piano). He did not think it desirable that I stay after school hours to practice for the games, and that I take off whole afternoons or days to play the games. He was proud of my achievements, but the raw fact remained that he objected to my athletic inclinations, insisting that I should

spend my energies and time in more useful ways. He could never see the sense in my batting rocks for hours at a time, and it was utterly mysterious to him why I should do such a thing after a day of hard work in the fields! Again, then, I came into contact with that economic element in American thinking in a way that caused me to dislike it. It tended to restrain me as I went about the task of getting along in the world as best I could. I genuinely resented it, and I saw new reasons for criticizing it. Again, I am making these personal remarks for the possible benefit of parents who have children afflicted with stuttering. It is far from my designs to appear as an ungrateful child—but scientific candor must be respected.

Finally, I want to refresh the point that it was my attitude toward my athletic ability, rather than the ability itself, that was of importance relative to my stuttering. The significant thing is that athletic skill was a compensation for my speech defect, and one of the most effective available to me. I shall always remember the utter joy I know in the games, and that in itself will be a compensation, not only for my stuttering, but for old age as well.

What happened to my athletic career after my nineteenth year belongs to a later chapter.

CHAPTER VII

UTOPIA

ALL of the activities I have described, and which I have called compensations for my stuttering, have been quite definite and concrete. They are activities which the casual observer might have noted. That I studied, played, wrote, that I was jovial, might have been plainly apparent to anybody; and in explaining the pertinent significance of those things, I had only to point them out and discuss them from my point of view.

But when I say that I have been a dreamer, that I have created a beautiful world of fancy, in which it has been possible for me to exist a goodly share of the time and in a very real sense—I shall have to ask you to take my word for it. As to my word, it shall be only a genuine statement concerning the relationship which this Utopia bears to my speech defect. I shall trust that whether or not the reader agrees with me in this statement, he will not forget that this is a stutterer's analysis of his own case and that truth, after all, consists simply in what the stutterer says; at least, everything he says has meaning

pertinent at the moment. That what I say does or does not support some other person's views is quite unimportant. This fact is to be borne in mind throughout this study. I am speaking always from the point of view of one who stutters, and I am referring constantly to my own experiences or to whatever those experiences have led me to consider. After all, this study constitutes an analysis which the competent reader will himself analyze.

As a child I found it altogether easy to induige in fantasy. It appears to me now that when I was a child I did not know exactly what was possible and what impossible. No doubt it was quite as easy to imagine the unreal as it was clearly to perceive the real. Then, I began to realize that I stuttered—and to dream after a certain fashion.

If you have read the foregoing pages you probably suspect more or less accurately what the title of this chapter implies. You are quite ready, it may be, to guess beforehand what my Utopia consisted of. In Utopia, you think, I did not stutter, I was a brilliant scholar, a superb athlete, a noted writer, and a person whom others liked wonderfully well; perhaps you are clever enough to suspect that in Utopia I was in love, and not at all lonely. If that is what you think, to that degree you are right.

You are also ready to insist, I suppose, that such

dreaming seems perfectly normal and of no clinical importance. Every normal child, it would appear, is guilty of the same sort of dreaming—if the element of stuttering is left out. To draft this phase of my life, for the purpose of explaining my stuttering and what stuttering means to me, may seem to you a bit forced.

Now, the arguments which you may want to propose do not invite me. I am engaged simply in setting down a genuine human document. The fact that I dreamed, made Utopia, is, of course, of little importance in this study. But the fact that I regarded that Utopia in a certain light; the fact that particular things went into the building of it; the fact that Utopia grew out of my experiences as a stutterer, rather than my experiences as a child merely; and the fact that I used Utopia for particular purposes—these facts matter considerably. The point is not that I dreamed, but that I dreamed much and definitely.

In Utopia I did not stutter. This came first. Always I have had a great hope. It was a hope in which there might be distinguished a considerable faith in the magical. For in spite of the fact that wherever I turned for relief from my stuttering, I turned to either the quack or the uninformed—in spite of this, I hoped and really believed that some

day I would find some one willing and able to help me obtain fluent speech. This is not unusual. On every hand we mark a tremendous faith exhibited by the oppressed; the less one has, it seems, the more faith and hope one clings to. The more one is driven to despair, the harder one rebounds to that desperate credulity which men have called a confidence in the justice of things. So, in Utopia, some day I would not stutter!

In fact, I was an unusually fluent speaker—in my dream world. Often I have carried on long conversations, in my day-dreaming, in which I contributed the greater and the more interesting share. There, in that world within myself, I have harrangued before huge audiences, and rendered them spellbound by oratory of unbelievable charm! Sweet thoughts. Sweet compensation for a stumbling tongue! And the more real I could make Utopia, the more like adequate revenge it all seemed to me.

It is true, also, that in Utopia I was increditably adept at all those things around which I had woven my earthly ambitions. Every child, I suppose, dreams of doing great things, and dreams most of doing those things which have in reality been most enjoyable. So, I thought of myself as a professional ball player, eclipsing the glory of Babe Ruth and Walter Johnson and all the rest. I was a scholar

characterized by nothing short of genius. My books were read everywhere, they were bought by the hundred thousand, and called masterpieces; and through them I acquired tremendous wealth. In Utopia, everybody liked me, admired me, praised me; and, in turn, I was kind to everybody and benevolent, and, of course, deserving of their most ardent praise. Such conceit! Whether conceit or not, it was certainly self-defense and a subtle kind of self-assertion. And it all betrayed a craving for superiority. I recall one day-dream in particular in which I set sail from a vaguely located island. As I recall, I was alone on the boat, and I stood with my feet wide apart at the helm. The craft sailed on from the east, in the general direction toward Canada. As I sailed, the boat became larger, I became larger, until both the boat and I reached absolutely enormous proportions. Evening came, and I chose to rest for the night. I anchored my ship to the earth itself! Whatever else that day-dream meant, it seems to me to have revealed a desire for a superiority unchallengeable, a superiority that could stalk the earth.

And, one night, having just enacted a gurgling prejudice against the Eighteenth Amendment, I dashed off what I hesitate to call a poem, but which is relevant at this point:

Let me be a maker of beds,
Oh god of the grave-diggers!
Let me scoop out holes in the womby earth
Where dead sorrows, and the tears that never drip
And the locked laughter
Shall choke on the fingers of earth,
The earth that cannot be buried
In holes scooped out of the womby earth.
Let me be a maker of beds.
Oh god of the grave-diggers!

Whatever that may mean to any one else, it means to me that somewhere in me, however deeply concealed from casual eyes, there was an inordinate longing for power. It was an unreasonable longing. I wanted more power than I needed to get along in the world. The point is that I wanted more than merely to get along. I wanted to get even with whatever force had made me a stutterer, and with that world in the eyes of which stuttering made me inferior. So—"Let me be a maker of beds, oh god of the grave-diggers!"

But you will note that I did not bluntly declare, even when under the influence of liquor, that I wanted to stalk the earth, that I wanted revenge, and that I cared to make no bones about it. I said it vaguely, indirectly. I said it so vaguely that not a few will deny that I said it at all, will insist that I said something else. I knew from long experience

that the greatest power, after all, lay in kindness on my part. However much I wanted to pillage the earth, I knew very well I could never do it in the guise of a buccaneer armed to the teeth. Long before, I had rejected the technique of Napoleon. It were wiser to go about the task in the innocent gray robe of benevolence! It were wiser to win my ends by seeming to deserve them. The usurper is acclaimed for a day; the saint is immortal.

These are not pleasant things to tell! I tell them solely because they throw some light on the nature of stuttering and the meaning of stuttering to one who suffers from it. Moreover, by these confessions I am not made unique; I only manifest frankness. I was surprised indeed to discover these things in myself, far within the wilderness of myself, but having discovered them, I knew much more than I formerly did about my neighbors. Also, these characteristics belonged to myself as a stutterer far more than to myself as a man. And the fact that rarely is there a man, who is not for practical purposes a lame man or a blind man, a Jew or a Democrat, leads me to the comforting (from my point of view) conclusion that most men dream of stalking the earth with their supreme arrogance. Men live largely to show the world how important they are. It is essential to their health and their posterity that they succeed in

that up to a reasonable extent; but it is essential to their ultimate well-being that they hold in check considerably or sublimate somehow those selfish ambitions. Because that is true, the kind and gracious man is the acme of wisdom.

In everyday life, I have said, I was very lonely. In Utopia, I was never lonely. I was surrounded by admiring friends. And I was even loved with devotion—by one woman, who remained for the most part rather vague. For no one woman loved me with the devotion I dreamed of; I had to create the woman out of the stuff that dreams are made of. In Utopia, there was a beautiful house, a home of great happiness, of connubial bliss. I lived there with a devoted companion, wrote my books, read much, and lived in comfort—though not in idleness. The point is that I was not lonely.

Wealth, as I have hinted, abounded in this dream estate. The chief source of this wealth was the books I wrote. I wanted money for the pleasures—travel, study, possession of desired things—it would make possible. I wanted it in order to exercise philanthropy. Philanthropy is magnified kindliness, and of that I have said quite enough. That philanthropy might also be an element of conceit, a symptom of that longing for superiority, may be an unpleasant thought, but none the less a thought that

is more or less justified. At any rate, the power of money to lend one distinction was not lost upon me, and accordingly its capacity to serve as a compensation for my speech defect is apparent. The significant thing is that I wanted more money than I should need, and to ascribe that want to vanity is only a part of the analysis.

This Utopia will appear more as a part of myself when I declare that I actually indulged in its pleasures a considerable share of the time. From about my twelfth to my twenty-second year, Utopia flourished and became richer almost day by day. Day-dreaming was for me a rather important part of the day's routine; it constantly interrupted my work; it was no small part of my play. In the rock-batting games, the tiddledywinks, the can-rubber dramatizations, something like fantasy was evident. Almost always when I attempted the reading of a book, I would imagine the glory of writing books of my own; when I set about the writing of a story, I immediately thought of it as already written and generally acclaimed, making me famous, bringing me wealth. As I rode the cultivator or the plow through my father's fields, my mind reached forward to Some Day, and I lived in Utopia, while the stubbled dust rose to surround me with the most drab reality. When I looked at the surrounding skyline, I saw

beyond it to distant and future glories. As I sat in silence in the midst of more garrulous companions, I created myself in fancy as a charming conversationalist. Sweet compensations! Honeyed antidotes for an ill too earthly! Upon going to bed at night, I found it difficult to sleep. It almost amounted to insomnia. I wove romances of grandeur. Had my pillow been parchment and my mind a pen, there might have been preserved a romantic verve to rank alongside the novels of Bandello and of Sir Walter Scott. I literally imagined myself into contentment.

Above all, my Utopia stood in contrast to my real world, and represented a revolt against it and escape from it. This revolt against my real world, against society, grew out of my inability to adjust myself adequately to that society; the escape into Utopia represented a gesture partly of defeat and partly of disgust and resentment. The person noting my genial exterior probably would not have suspected the existence of this deeper dissatisfaction and disgust—until possibly after my nineteenth year, when it came near enough to the surface of myself to become almost an evident characteristic. But for the most part I laughed, in spite of the discontent which lay more deeply than my mirth. It was a way I had of enduring the unpleasantries of a stumbling tongue.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NINETEENTH YEAR AND AFTER

WHEN I was eighteen years old, I enrolled as a freshman in the McPherson (Kansas) College. My father and mother, my sister, and I removed to the town of McPherson to live. McPherson was a county seat, a quiet town of five thousand inhabitants, with a prospect in each direction across many miles of level land. A few facts will serve roughly as a setting for the two years that followed. My three brothers had gone to a southern city to enter the business world; my father retained possession of his land, and my older sister and her husband took charge of it. I remained on the farm and in the Roxbury community during the summer of my eighteenth year; and I returned to the farm to work for a few weeks during the summer of my twentieth year.

The move to town—retirement from the farm—had been taken after ten years of indecision. It is difficult for aged farmers to change their lives. But mother had become so ill that expediency advised the move to town; upon arriving in her new home,

she was immediately put to bed—and she remained there for a year.

Coming into my new environment and entering college, I was aware of advance, or at least movement, in a particular direction. I needed a good education to despite my speech handicap. Nobody disputed that. I felt, then, that I was setting out to acquire a practical advantage—in a sense, and to a degree, I was setting out to reduce Utopia to reality.

My first year in college may be set aside in a few remarks. My stuttering did not seem much affected by the change. There was some intensifying of my awareness of stuttering as a fact of my life; but there were also distractions from this trend of thought. I came to frequent the billiard parlor. I was made feature editor of the college paper. I made a few friends. Generally, I enjoyed living in town and going to college.

Then came my nineteenth year. When the historian looks back through the centuries, he puts his finger on the period of the Renaissance and declares it an epoch of great consequence; coming to the French Revolution, he again pauses and pronounces it of great moment. The marks of those events have persisted. It is a fact that there are times when the trend of human events comes to a head, and the

undercurrents roar into the lap of the flood. What happens to humanity happens to the individual. There are moments when a man lives for destiny, moments come suddenly, it seems, gone soon perhaps, after which he is different from what he was before. And, as in the history of a nation, so in the history of an individual; if we understand what has preceded, we are in a position to understand the particular occurrence of moment.

If, then, the reader has perused the foregoing pages, he is ready to follow when I say that in my nineteenth year, as I was entering my second year in college, the revolt, which I had been nursing deeply, began to break out in thought and conduct.

There were a few rather definite reasons for this. The general trend of my attitude and personality can be better understood in its relation to my stuttering if the four or five main points of reference be made to stand out and bear the brunt of greater importance. In the first place, my literary ambitions persisted and grew stronger. They rode steadily over whatever opposition faced them. My father hoped that I would take to farming, or, if not that, that I would study law or medicine. My brothers tried to influence me to go into business with them. Insofar as mere indifference to those opportunities did not prove a sufficient defense against them, ac-

tive opposition and some belligerence were necessary.

At all events, I hated the farm. It tended to stifle my imagination and to deaden my æsthetic sense. (A tired farmer watching a beautiful sunset is to me a picture of genuine irony!) The farm was the epitome of solitude—so much territory and so little human companionship, especially since I stuttered anyway. Any one with a desire to talk about the subtler qualities of literature and with a love of true scholarship might as well be deaf and dumb in the Roxbury valley (and I say that with a real respect for the villagers). It is simply unreasonable to expect to find those things there; but it is not unreasonable to want them, wherever they may be had. I was lonely there, on the farm, and loneliness pained me; I had known so much of it. Also, the farm offered no promise of glory, as I understood the term, no means of self-assertion or gratifying self-expression. Without those things, I should have been only a stutterer, an inferior person. The thought of that was always detestable.

Business, law, and medicine, as well, were essentially like that. In each of those fields my stuttering would have severely handicapped me; I wanted to shun them. Business, with its well-known aversion to artistic values, repulsed me anyway. I could see

no advantage for me in either law or medicine. I wanted to write; I had to.

In the second place, I had gone to a distant city in the summer of 1923, to be treated for my speech defect. There was a "stuttering school" there which advertised itself alluringly, and held out a promise of free speech which appealed to me tremendously. In over twenty years it has drawn to it hundreds and hundreds of stutterers; I hope, but I doubt, that the others fared better than I. The slowness with which bona fide speech clinics have developed, and the desperation and relative ignorance of the stutterers account largely for the prosperity of such "stuttering schools"—if I may be allowed to express my own opinion.

At the "institute" I was taught to talk very, very slowly, to keep the voice flowing, to hit consonants lightly, and to glide over words. I was taught to keep calm and to flaunt the attitude of the-public-be-damned, in order to counteract self-consciousness. For two hours each day I was supposed to read aloud in a drawling manner, slurring over "hard" sounds, and never allowing the voice to stop except for the inspiration of air. Each day there were physical exercises, much swinging of the arms, bending and weaving of the body, kicking of the legs, and deep breathing. The vowels (*a, e, i, o, u*), syllables,

and slogans were repeated in a loud voice, to the time of swinging Indian clubs or dumb-bells. These exercises were done by all of the stutterers, assembled in a large drill room. While the swinging of the Indian clubs was in order, each stutterer was called upon to give a slogan, such as "Little drops of water will wear away a rock," or "Have more backbone and less wishbone." Each slogan so given was repeated by the whole group in chorus, as they rhythmically swung their clubs.

Exercises finished, all of the stutterers seated themselves near the front of the room. On certain days, the director would then mount a platform in front of the group and deliver an exhortation. "You can if you think you can!" he would thunder. "Use your will power. Don't give up. Be the master of your fate and the captain of your soul!" He would cry out in such a fashion for perhaps ten minutes. Two of the stutterers, who were "advanced students," would then take charge of the class. Each stutterer, as a rule, would be called upon to go up on the platform and deliver a short speech. The speech would be delivered in a drawling monotone, and frequently the audience would find it impossible to make head or tail of it. On some days there would be "practice" in talking over the telephone, transacting business, or paying social calls. Two

students, for example, would engage in conversation over dummy telephones. Two others would go through the act of making a real estate exchange.

That, and similar details, constituted "Nature's Method" of correcting faulty speech. If the stutterer could talk at all, he could talk under such conditions. It was almost as good as singing in a choir. Everything was prepared for fluency. There was rhythm, even to the extreme of swinging Indian clubs. There were exercises to insure good physical health. There was an atmosphere of calm and confidence. I did not stutter very much under those circumstances, especially whenever I diligently employed the drawling monotone in speaking. Almost everything that would disturb the even functioning of my nervous system was eliminated from my environment. My fear of stuttering decreased—because I didn't stutter! It did not work the other way around. My higher neural centers were given every opportunity to carry on their work without being blocked out by emotional stresses and strains, and given opportunity they performed fairly well. That was to be expected.

Whenever I left the "institute" and went down into the city, I stuttered! I stuttered because, so it seems to me, the higher neural centers were constantly being disturbed in the world outside the

"institute," for the conditions there were radically different. After spending three months in the diligent use of "Nature's Method" I returned home—stuttering just as much as ever. The world at large is never like the "institute," and that is why environmental therapy, such as was used there, is generally impractical. Of course, the stutterer can talk if he is given that much of a chance, but the world never gives him that much of a chance or anything like that much. Unless the stutterer wants to remain in an institution all of his life, he had better face the facts of the world he has to live in.

After spending three months at the "institute," I left one morning in a moment of thorough disgust. I had gone to the "institute" with high hopes, and I had found to my great delight that I could talk if I drawled my words slowly enough and calmly enough. I had been overjoyed. But the truth was bound to come to me sooner or later, and when it came it was a catastrophe. I said good-by to nobody; I went to the station, stuttered to the ticket agent and to the conductor, and sat down wearily in a red plush seat. As the train crept out of the city, I closed my eyes in despair. I have hated that city ever since.

As I approached the end of my journey homeward, my anticipations became utter confusion. There

was a joy in my flight from the city I had come to hate; there was a heavy dread in returning with the same old stumbling tongue to Roxbury. My family were to meet me at Canton, the nearest railroad station, ten miles south of Roxbury, and as the train screamed into the little town and scrunched to a halt, I was dazed out of all composure. I alighted from the coach with an uncontrolled grin and glanced about blearily. My mother and an older brother met me, and I was terribly glad to see them—and terribly ashamed that I was still a stutterer. As we walked toward the car I did not know which direction I was going. I slumped into the back seat alongside my mother, and said nothing. Then the car swung around, crept over the tracks, and nosed out along an old familiar road. Slowly I came to myself; I took a deep breath, several of them, and began to talk. I stuttered, but I talked, eagerly—almost desperately.

That disappointment was a shock from which I have never completely recovered. Stuttering as a fact of life became more mysterious, more ominous, certainly more formidable, and the escape into Utopia became less easy and more deliberate. The revolt that was Utopia became belligerent. But what is of greatest importance, I set about as never before to seek relief from this horrible thing, to fight it

with a vengeance. I hated stuttering. I was sick of it and all that it involved. I wrote letters to every one I heard of who might be able to cure me, but everywhere I turned I encountered a society which did not understand stuttering, had never cared enough about its millions of stutterers to study them with anything like thoroughness. What else could this call for but revolt? I realized keenly that I did not belong, that I was a lone wolf. I sought solace in a loneliness almost morbid, and a communion with the elements of nature that betrayed the sensitiveness of a wound.

There were summer nights on the farm when, hushed by a stumbling tongue, I stole away from the people I could not talk with and went alone to the fields to lie in the starlight there and talk with myself. Those were wild nights, my memory tells me now, with the gentle charm of things wild. I knew that the stars were lonely, if only I were lonely, and I knew that the moon was the replica of my own soul—always and uncritically. I talked with myself about trivial things, that mattered much to me then, little things upon which a great deal seemed to depend; and the stars listened in genuine comradeship, and the earth nudged me like a friend. Those were real spirits—the stars, the earth, the moon, and the night wind nosing the fields. They had meaning and

gave meaning to my journey through the days, and I felt they were near like caresses, or more near still like the air in my throat. They were more near by far than the people around me, who listened, often impatiently, while I struggled with the words that served imperfectly to translate myself into their understanding. I got more comfort and friendship from the very grass itself, on summer nights, than I got from the men with whom I lived. That is why I loved those elemental realities, knowing their values were genuine, knowing they lay behind the blind of human artifice and deceit.

My Utopia had proved false to a large degree. I was forced out of it and into a world which, however real, lacked substantial human companionship. I loved those summer nights; but of the world of men around me I despaired. Out of this largely, then, grew the revolt of my nineteenth year. All this I am telling, because I want to explain that as a stutterer I reacted to society and to my speech defect; because it might prove helpful, because men wiser than I say it is important, I want to tell about it.

In the summer on my nineteenth year, my mother died. After all, she was my staunchest friend. I was more lonely than ever. No home now—only the large, almost empty house, a grim unlovely alcove, a sad place filled with pathetic memories. A year be-

fore, she had moved to town and had literally been carried into her new home, and put to bed. She had lain there for a year; she got her hard-earned rest!

I think it unnecessary that I elaborate on this theme; the reader understands it now. By one way or another, we learn, each in his own manner, that life is such and such, has this to offer, takes that in payment. We learn to call it by a name, fix adjectives to it, weave ludicrous philosophies around the thought of it. It etches a kind of smile on our face, or strikes our forehead with a frown; it draws taut our lips, or half parts them in a grimace of amazement. If, in the death of my mother, I sensed reality to be less than justice; if I did not weep, but stood silent with dismay and some resentment, it is not necessary that I defend myself in that. If my speech difficulty had furrowed my sensitiveness—to make me silent, not really with pride nor yet with a docility in the face of tremendous inevitability—or if the spectacle of death, courteous but unrelenting, prepared me for a youthful bitterness, a premature cynicism, at all events I am obliged to make no defense. I am only pointing out the fact as nearly as I can approximate it. Whatever interpretation, if any at all, the reader wishes to supply, the fact follows that I did become bitter and sarcastic; my geniality lost its genuine tone and degenerated to

the level of conscious tactfulness—not always employed, moreover.

About six weeks after that event, something else imposed itself into the scheme of things. While operating a printing press, I had my left hand partially crushed. Athletics became, in a sudden instant, a fond recollection! No more was I to hear the crazy yelling of a crowd gone wild over something I had done. No more the tense ecstacy of a game's crucial moment, the wild joy of scoring the winning basket, the melodious ring of ball against bat, the whole body thrilling with the genuine symphony of joy! I realized more keenly than ever what athletics had meant to me, and now I turned from them to find myself significantly and unmistakably a stutterer. The smiles that gained my lips were somewhat twisted.

> And where my footsteps darken on the dew
> You find the way that life taught me to pass.

Moreover, life provided me with companionship along the way. I was happy. I envied nobody. I took my new bitterness and sarcasm to be a deeper wisdom, a new treasure won by a revolution in thought. With my new companions I gladly became unconventional in the prairie sense, unorthodox, with mockery for our neighbors' sacred sentiments.

We spoke of ourselves as the Anti-Christian Band —which "band" was after all nothing more than a state of mind—and the other students at the little college came to brand us as the atheists. How that amused us! How glad we were to be thought of as different. Not only that we enjoyed shocking other people, but that we utterly enjoyed feeling that we were superior to them in understanding of the world. We spoke of life as though it were a thing stripped of all but scant mystery. We thought of ourselves as critics; I was made associate editor of the college paper and I thrilled in my ability to arouse the president and the dean to indignation. Our religious unorthodoxy all but divided the faculty in a controversy, and we felt greatly important. Indeed, I shall always recall with pleasure my career as a college radical; it was the most exciting period of my young life.

We were critics. A critic, of course, must be supremely conceited, whatever else he may be. That is why he is a critic. He probably does a great deal of good, he may even have a worthy ideal, but above all he senses the thrill of mastery because he imposes his opinions on the public. I hardly think he has a sincere passion for the truth. Man being what he is, there is nothing quite so fickle as the truth and nothing quite so futile as a love of it. It is not the truth

the critic loves—if he is worth any consideration—but it is the liberty to express his opinions and the liberty to consider them sound. To rise above the appearance of things, to be a judge, superior, absolutely superior to the general impenetrability of nature—that is the critic's passion. Well, that was my passion as a college radical.

Athletics gone, Utopia damaged, geniality proved rather futile under the circumstances, loneliness increased, and all in all forced to think of myself more than ever as a stutterer, I turned to a new compensation. By the show of revolt, by accusation, through mockery and sarcasm of my environment, and by the flaunting of superior understanding as a critic, I attempted to rise above the level of a mere stutterer. That is my explanation—that as a stutterer I made that adjustment to a particular situation.

CHAPTER IX

THE NINETEENTH YEAR AND AFTER

(Continued)

THE ways one might have gone through this world are without number, and the reasons why escape us. Foresight is chiefly guesswork and history is mostly a fiction, while to-day holds all the fascination of mysteriously tumbling dice. The little destinies of humankind surprise us, spring up where and when we least expect them and in such peculiar forms that it is often years before we marvel that we have seen them at all. Of what the moving finger has written we have translated but a fragment, and yet our faces assume the bland assuredness of learning, and we frown on one another and harangue. It must be supremely amusing!

But we can only point to something or other and say, "Because of this . . ." and if we do not insult logic we cannot be condemned. At any rate, in that exciting sophomore year at McPherson, I came under the influence of a teacher who did much to change the course of my life. She directed me to Dr. Lee Edward Travis and the State University of Iowa,

and so we turn to a new scene and what occurred there.

In 1926, I entered my third year of college, and I began corrective work on my speech defect under the direction of Dr. Travis. On arriving at his office my first move was to take from my pocket a letter which he had written to me. I handed this letter to him in order to avoid the necessity of introducing myself, for my stuttering was severe. After a few informal interviews, the doctor proceeded to put me through a series of laboratory tests. Since then I have served as a laboratory subject about twenty times, at least, and I hope some day to write about my experiences as a white rat. It is sufficient here to say that the instrumental findings indicated that I should have been left-handed. That means in simple terms that my native neural dominance lay in the right hemisphere of my brain. In spite of this fact, I had always been right-handed. No one recalls that I was ever shifted from the use of the left hand to the use of the right; it is apparent that I learned to use the right because the large family with which I was surrounded was made up of right-handed individuals.

On the basis of my own case, then, it can be seen that stutterers who present "right-handedness" may or may not be natively right-handed. It often proves

nothing whatever that the stutterer presents no left-handedness in his early life history; he may have had a native left-handedness which he never developed. For certainly the world is not made for left-handed people; most machines, most door knobs, table service, and an endless number of other things are designed on the assumption that everybody is right-handed. Unless the young child, then, has a decided left-handed dominance, he will be influenced by almost everything which he encounters to develop a major dexterity in the right hand.

In the introduction to this book, Dr. Travis has sketched his explanation of stuttering on the neurological basis. From what he has said, it can readily be concluded that any tampering with native handedness (that is, native cerebral dominance) may possibly disrupt the functioning of the central nervous system. This will not always happen, but the odds are too high to warrant the risk. And there is really no more reason why everybody should be right-handed than there is reason why everybody should be Scandinavian, so far as the logic of social adaptation is concerned. There is nothing rude about eating with the left hand. While, therefore, a dire consequence may not result from shifting a normally left-handed child to the use of the right hand, yet the advantage to be gained is so slight and the risk

is so great that the shifting is utterly foolish. The organs with which we speak, since they were primarily designed by nature for biting, chewing, swallowing, and breathing, are already placed under so great a burden that to meddle with them is to invite disaster. And to invite disaster in such a vital matter is to be downright stupid.

Having discovered a neurological basis for my speech difficulty, we then proceeded to a thorough psychoanalytic investigation of my life in order to discover every factor which might have been in any way responsible for the stuttering. This investigation showed quite conclusively that there were no psychopathic or "mental" or "nervous" causes underlying the defect. It did show, however, that as a stuttering individual I had reacted to a glib society rather vehemently, that because of my stuttering I had developed a few more or less morbid attitudes of the anxiety and paranoid orders. The psychoanalytic study tended to clear these up—but the stuttering continued!

This is important. Why did the psychoanalytic study clear up my morbid reactions to my defect and to society? For this reason, that a worry reaction, a bewilderment, was replaced by an objective interest in the defect. I became interested in stuttering, my own stuttering, in quite the same manner

that I am interested in stones, trees, electrons, or anything else to which I may react with curiosity but with no fear. There was no magic whatever in this changing of attitudes. By studying myself and my stuttering objectively I acquired an objective interest in them. An analogy might be drawn in this fashion: while men did not know what lightning was, they regarded it with terror and with a sickening mystical awe; as soon, however, as they discovered that lightning consisted of an electrical discharge, they became scientificially interested in it, and they began to speculate on the possibility of using that electrical power for their own benefit. I found out, then, that my stuttering was probably a neurological disturbance, and that my emotional morbities were simply reactions to that stuttering and to a fluent society. It remained for me only to study the defect from every angle, and to attack it with a new fearlessness. It was so simple that there was nothing else to do.

I have been trying to become left-handed. Handedness is, of course, only a symptom of the cerebral dominance. By becoming left-handed, then, I have hoped to reëstablish my native dominance in its original intensity, and by so doing to harmonize the functioning of my speech organs. The severity of my stuttering has decreased markedly, although I

have not yet become entirely left-handed. At this stage of the game, however, I am quite willing to conclude that as soon as I have succeeded in shifting completely to left-handedness, I shall talk without stuttering. That is merely carrying the logic, based on my actual experience, to its ultimate conclusion.

When I came to Iowa, a severe stutterer, I reacted as a stutterer to a new set of circumstances. I have described that reaction in some of its phases in the above paragraphs. It is also important in certain of its other phases, which relate more pertinently to my social situation.

In the preceding chapter it was explained that I had become an avowed rebel. At Iowa, I fell in with a few other radical students with whom my sympathies were joined, and beyond our little group lay the great world and the mob which my friends and I hated and ridiculed. I loved that little band of friends; they not only tolerated my stuttering, but they understood my attitude. Whatever the world may think of them, I know they were supremely human; as comrades they were staunch and sincere. However far from them in opinion I may stray, I can never help admiring their ideals and their humanity, and respecting their opinions. They were followers of Shaw and Mencken, they read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and Omar Khayyám, and they

had that fault of insisting on ideals which the human race is not yet ready to embrace.

But I found friends, too, outside that small group. There were two or three professors who believed in me, who encouraged me, and by their own manner of living they prodded me on. They gave me tangible opportunities, financial and social; they invited me to their homes and refused to laugh when I blubbered out my meager share of the conversations. I craved to work for those men; they expected me to make the most of what I had, and I couldn't bear to disappoint them. They made it possible for me to make my scholarship a means of livelihood, and by sheer kindness they forced on me a place in the social life of the campus. They made my Utopia increasingly unnecessary, and largely because of them, I was able to retrieve something of my former geniality.

If this is to be a genuine human document, I must thank these people, in the only way, so inadequate, that is possible to me. I can only say here that I am grateful.

The inescapable solitude of the human soul, mankind's most deepset agony, was immeasurably alleviated for me by one who played so great a part, and whom the reader can understand so well by inference, that elaborate discussion is not necessary.

Let me say only that she destroyed largely my cause for revolt, took the edge off my rebellion, reduced a great share of Utopia to reality, and caused the bitterness and sarcasm to fade increasingly from my personality. I may be spared, I think, from saying more here. It is unnecessary to do so.

My geniality has returned as a result of whatever wisdom I have. Incidentally, it may be still a compensation for my stumbling tongue. I have a play life, not as an athlete, but as a dubbing golfer; and a few times each week I go to the gymnasium and throw a basketball around. The swish of the basket is still fascinating to me. My Utopia has been deprived of much of its sheer fantasy; it has become more a plan, the expression of certain ambitions. Not that I have become "practical"—heaven forbid! I find a tremendous joy in imagination, but not just because I stutter. I want to go on studying and writing, not because I cannot talk well, but because I have come to love those things; long indulgence has made them a part of me. And, above all perhaps, I have become reconciled to my social environment. It is no longer so necessary that I become boisterous and that I clown and laugh. I laugh, of course, and I enjoy humor, but not because I stutter. That "mob" which I once hated and ridiculed, I now regard as made up of human beings, essentially

like myself, who have suffered perhaps as I have. The only way to understand them is first to sympathize with them, to appreciate the undeniable fact that they have their own very good reasons—however unknown to them—for doing whatever it is they do. It has been true of myself, and I lack the conceit to suppose that I am an exception.

Indeed, because I have stuttered I think I realize more keenly than most the significance of each man's little misery. Life is precious, and it makes all the difference in the world whether a man be born black or white, Jew or Gentile, deformed or beautiful. Those are the things which shape our lives far more than we commonly suppose. We have all read the story of the man without a country, and we have all felt a profound sympathy for that man, in spite of our patriotism. We knew that he was despairingly lonely and that life for him was very largely a futile and ridiculous gesture. We have failed, however, to grasp the startling truth that the same story might be told in behalf of the one-legged man, the one-armed man, the blind, the deaf, and the ugly; the woman with too much hair on her face and the woman with pigeon toes. All such people are exiles. More than that, pampered children or abused children are driven by ignorant parents to lead lives which society does not greatly understand.

And there are the hoboes, Jim Tully's "beggars of life," who wander the earth alone in life and go unsung to death. These things are of tremendous importance, for life is precious. It is by suffering, moreover, that one comes to realize that truth; it is by realizing what it means to stutter, or to limp, or to go blind, that one gains the greatest insight into the mystery of one's own self and the greatest sympathy for mankind.

To the casual observer perhaps I am quite the same individual that I have been for years, except that I stutter less than I did formerly. The important fact is that my attitude toward my stuttering has changed tremendously. Not as a man, but as a stutterer, I am not the same. For always I have been a stutterer, since I first realized that my tongue was awkward. But the man, the human being, which was evident before that time, has never ceased to exist and has followed more or less the story outlined for it in the very dawn of my life. Like a vine among the branches of a growing tree, stuttering has been entangled in my life. Always I have directed my energies against it, and here and there my course has swerved because of it; now and then it has held me in check for a time. It has taught me to write, however imperfectly, and in other ways it has left its mark indelibly upon me.

But as the shackles of stuttering drop from me little by little, it is the human being, as distinct from the stutterer, that emerges!

All through this book, the stress of significance has been on my reaction toward my stuttering and toward society. The important thing has been my attitude—the kind of importance I chose to attach to these things. That I stuttered at all, and even that I played, wrote, laughed, studied, and dreamed —all this, in and of itself, was of secondary importance.

Since coming to Iowa I have done something that is of absolute significance. I have stripped from my speech defect its ominous mystery. Mystery is always a breeder of fright and terror and despair; it is the worst tyrant of the unenlightened stutterer. The study of psychology, of anatomy and neurology, even to the slender extent to which I have studied them, has all but destroyed the dread grip that stuttering had on me. It is almost futile, of course, to speak of the debt of gratitude I owe to Dr. Travis. I can only hope that my acknowledgment of it may indicate that he has lifted a heavy burden from my life. He knows, perhaps, and I can surmise, the good he has done for me.

I want most to say that the terror of stuttering and the least unpleasantness of it lie not in a stum-

bling tongue, but rather in the stutterer's inability to understand himself and his situation as a speech defective. I have succeeded for all practical purposes, under the guidance of Dr. Travis, in gaining that understanding of myself, and in that my happiness lies. In all truth, I am happy, for an unsentimental reason, and my joy will last my time. Perhaps it will outlive me—as a hope and a courage in those millions of exiled stutterers who suffer in our midst.

CHAPTER X

STUTTERING IN DETAIL

IN order to give a more complete representation of the flesh-and-blood stutterer, I consider it essential to deal, to the extent that interest and relevancy will permit, with the process of stuttering itself, as my experience has led me, chiefly through introspection and retrospection, to understand it. This discussion of the production of various sounds will involve a consideration of the somatic and mental attributes of that production peculiar to my own case—accompanying sensations, accessory movements or gestures, and states of mind.

I have said that I stutter for all practical purposes impartially on all sounds and sound combinations. It appears that the social situation under which speech is attempted, together with the bodily and mental condition at the moment, is perhaps largely responsible for the severity of the difficulty. As I have said before, the stuttering organism reacts more vigorously to some situations than to others.

One attribute is common to all my stuttering: tenseness of the somatic musculatures, more notice-

able in the abdomen and shoulders. This is true regardless of the fact that particular sounds are characterized by particular types of stuttering. In the abdominal region this tensity is concentrated because of the restricted contraction of the nearby diaphragm; in the shoulders it is a function of the prolonged distention or deflation of the lungs and the consequent effect on the attendant musculatures. The effort involved in speaking with difficulty, however, is accompanied by a complete somatic contraction. Close your fist deliberately and you will feel throughout your arm the kinæsthetic experience which I mean to describe. In cases of extraordinary stuttering, I am aware of this heightened tensity of the muscles in the arms, face, neck, torso, and even in the legs. In the tongue it is especially marked.

It is not necessary, moreover, that the actual act of stuttering be in occurrence for this muscular tensity to appear. Anticipation of stuttering is often sufficient. Furthermore, this anticipation may precede the attempt to speak by a considerable length of time, even hours—in rare cases days. I have dreaded the impending necessity of making a formal introduction, knowing that it would not come until several days later. I have experienced the bodily and mental accompaniments of stuttering far in advance of the actual act of making a telephone call,

buying a railroad ticket, presenting myself to a new employer or a strange host or hostess. The reader will possibly recall the confusion of my consciousness when the train carrying me from the "institute" was approaching home. In that instance my thoughts were almost entirely distracted, and even my vision was blurred and my sense of direction momentarily disturbed. I was hardly aware of what was going on around me. I was anticipating stuttering in a situation where stuttering meant the admission of failure—and it must be remembered that it always means the admission of a defect, an inferiority.

It might be well to pause at this point to consider the significance of such a bodily and mental state in the classroom, for instance, or at a dance or dinner. Stuttering, it will be seen, is not a mere speech defect; it is far more than that. If, from this point of view, the school teacher can look upon a speech defective, she can appreciate at once why it is unjustly true that stutterers, on the whole, are retarded in school achievement, and are even ranked according to their intelligence, by certain experimenters, in a perfectly absurd manner. This almost criminal state of affairs should be more widely understood. All that is needed to improve it is good sense on the part of the teachers.

It is to be understood, then, that when I was a more severe stutterer than I am at present, I was seldom permitted to forget that I stuttered. When not attempting speech, I was anxious a large share of the time lest I be called on to speak, or I was definitely looking forward to speaking, possessed of that dread and fear I have tried to describe. What I have said concerning the physical characteristics of that condition might imply the nature of the mental attributes of it. Obviously, speaking was unpleasant to me, and as a rule I tried to avoid it—unless the situation was one that I could enjoy; I have described, in previous chapters, situations in which I rather enjoyed speaking. When I say that I tried to avoid speaking, that is exactly what I mean; I had many devices for that express purpose. With a number of these devices of avoidance and escape the reader is familiar, but there is one other which discloses so well the state of mind out of which it developed: I had a way of avoiding meeting people whom I knew, by turning a corner at the opportune moment, or going into a store or shop. There have been times—there still are now and then—when it is difficult for me to say the ordinary hello. Not to do so is rude, of course; I simply choose by avoidance to forestall the possibility of appearing rude.

In this example, and throughout the previous chapters, I have implied the nature of my mind, in the sense of its being a stutterer's mind. To the degree that it is adaptive, deliberately or undeliberately, it is quite the same as other minds. That it is sensitive and responsive fails to set it off as being distinctive, save possibly in the extent of these qualities. I have been aware of stuttering as a highly important fact of my life; I have been aware of it as something which has marked me, made me different from other people. I have been fearfully, dreadfully, angrily, and despondently aware of it. And in fighting the fact of stuttering, my mind has come upon a great hope, and here and there has seized upon a tremendous joy. The deeper my despair, the greater my joy in what might often be called the commonplace. Even the life of the exile has its riches.

Having said quite enough concerning the stutterer in his general rôle, I shall turn to deal with the process of stuttering itself. Breathing, vocalization, and articulation must obviously be drawn into account; somatic and mental attributes of the stuttering instance must also be examined.

In stuttering on vowel sounds, the lip positions are exaggerated. Difficulty in pronouncing *a* as in *at*, *e* as in *ever*, and *i* as in the pronoun *I*, is char-

acterized by tensely parted lips. The lips are usually overly parted, and the position is prolonged, in severe instances, to the early stages of fatigue of the lip muscles. In these sounds the jaws are spread and taut to the degree of practical immobility. The lingual muscles are comparatively tense, the tongue fills the floor of the mouth, being wide and flared, the tip extending at times across the lower front teeth. In stuttering on the back vowals, as the *o* in *loot* and in *go,* the lips are more rounded and protruded, but none the less tense; the tongue is compactly contracted, and a tensity of the neck muscles is more manifest. In the *u* sound as in *use,* the lips are rather lax and slightly parted. The tongue is pressed firmly against the teeth, and sometimes protrudes outward between the narrowly separated teeth; the blocking is most evident at that place, with the jaws tending to clamp but remaining parted, so that the tongue extends precariously between the teeth, which one set of muscles is trying to force apart while another set is evidently trying to close them.

Similar to this process is the one involved in blocking on the *e* sound as in *eat.* The chief difference between the two is that in pronouncing *e* the tongue is forced hard against the upper front teeth; or, sometimes, the tip of the tongue is drawn

up and back, until it touches the roof of the mouth, and in this position the tongue is widely extended, so that it touches the teeth on both sides of the mouth. Difficulty on the *a* as in *ale* is very much like that on the *a* as in *at*, which I have described. The *i* sound as in *it* presents difficulty comparable to that encountered with *use* and *ever* and *eat*. The lips and jaws are parted, and the tongue strives tensely in a position either against the roof of the mouth or on the floor of the mouth, or midway between the two extremes; the tip of the tongue either presses firmly against the lower front teeth, less firmly against the upper front teeth, or is drawn backward into the mouth. Stuttering on the *u* as in *up* is a gasping process, with the lips inertly parted and the tongue lying inertly on the floor of the mouth. The jaws, too, seem rather passively parted, the block being chiefly a stoppage of breath in the larynx.

A respiratory stoppage will be noted as a characteristic of much of this stuttering; moreover, the stoppage occurs in some cases in the laryngeal region rather than in the buccal cavity. The stuttering is chiefly vocalic and respiratory rather than articulatory. This is especially true of stuttering on *up, it, at, ever, I, over,* and several other of the vowel sounds, in which it is generally found that a com-

plete respiratory stoppage occurs in the larynx. In certain other forms of vowel stuttering, the air passage is more or less open, and the difficulty becomes more pronounced in the articulatory mechanism proper; this is seen in the hissing quality of the stuttering on *eat,* or on *use.*

While these articulatory and vocalic disturbances are going on, the lungs are in a state of prolonged distention or deflation. If the air escapes, it does so in a jerky manner. The tension of the diaphragm is keenly noticeable, and a sensation of muscular contraction is present with special emphasis in the abdominal regions, the thorax, and the shoulders. This sensation extends to the arms and hands, and becomes evident, in aggravated cases, in a weakening of the legs which suggests general exhaustion. The eyes may be tightly closed and the face disfigured by accessory grimaces. The next stages involve an observably quickened heartbeat, flushing, and perspiration, and clonic contractions externally evident in the facial regions. An instability of nervous control is manifest, especially in fidgeting, which is most apparent in the hands and fingers. Ultimate success in pronouncing the sound is instantly followed by partial relief from all this tensity, but not at all by anything resembling normal relaxation. And if speaking is continued it is probable that stuttering,

with its unpleasant accompaniments, will be resumed shortly.

For the sake of description, I have dealt with more or less extreme symptoms. There are degrees in the severity of stuttering, of course, but fundamentally stuttering is as I have depicted it (in my own case), especially on the sounds referred to above. This type of stuttering is characteristic for all qualities of vowel sounds, for the most part, and has much in common with consonantal stuttering.

In stuttering on consonantal sounds the muscular tenseness is present in quite the same manner as it is in the stuttering on vowels. In blocking on the *b* and *p* sounds, the lips are tightly pursed, the tongue either inert or contracted tightly against the floor of the mouth, the jaws either inert or firmly closed, and no air escapes except in spurts through the nasal passages. The lungs are in a state of prolonged distention or deflation, but it will be noted that the respiratory stoppage occurs at the lips and not in the throat. The stuttering in this case is more largely articulatory than it is in vowel stuttering. The nasal *m* presents the same type of stuttering, save that the tongue may in some instances be tightly pressed against the roof of the mouth.

The upper front teeth press firmly on the lower lip in stuttering on *f* and *v*, and the jaws are usually,

therefore, slightly parted; the tongue lies on the floor of the mouth, the tip curled upward more or less. Here, too, the respiratory stoppage takes place in the front of the mouth.

Stuttering on the dentals and spirants—*d, l, t, z, s,* soft *c, ch, th* as in *then, th* as in *thin*—and the nasal *n,* is usually accompanied by a tensely flared lower lip. The tongue is pressed firmly against the front hard palate or the back of the front upper teeth. The jaws may be closed firmly, but as a rule they are open and display a pincer-like tendency to close —evidence of conflict between antagonistic musculatures. In the spirants there is generally a slow futile exhalation, resulting in a hissing sound; in the dentals proper the lungs are in a state of prolonged distention. In the case of the nasal *n,* the air escapes through the nose, the vocalization taking on the quality of a nasal humming; the tremor resulting from this futile vocalization is felt in the throat and tongue.

In velar stuttering, on *g, k, q,* and hard *c,* the respiratory stoppage occurs at the region of the soft palate. The tongue is firm against the roof of the mouth, far back in the buccal cavity. The jaws are open, displaying the pincer-like tendency to close, as noted in dental stuttering. The lips are open, the lower one having a slight tendency to flare tensely.

Palatal stuttering, on *h, j,* and *r,* is similar to velar stuttering. The respiratory stoppage takes place at the mid-roof of the mouth. It should be noted that in blocking on *j,* the jaws are tightly closed and the lips more tense, the lower one flared somewhat.

Somatic tenseness is characteristic of consonantal stuttering, the respiratory disturbances are marked in both consonantal and vowel stuttering, and the instability of nervous control is also common to both.

Frequently I approach the articulation of a sound by employing a vocalization such as *ah* or *uh,* from which I glide into the articulation proper. This apparently serves to relax the mechanisms involved in speech, and to delay momentarily the actual attack on a troublesome word. It occurs in a moment of hopeful expectancy in which my thoughts seem to center around the real intention of avoiding stuttering by not allowing the tongue or jaws or lips to lock—by "smuggling" the word past the articulatory mechanism while that mechanism is sufficiently relaxed to function. What happens is that I "throw the mechanism off guard" by beginning the *ah* tone, and then glide into the articulation proper before the organism can balk. It might be thought of as a strategy of the mind directed against a part of the body. This implies that it is a voluntary process, and correctly so, for in attempting speech, I am con-

stantly alert and watching for every opportunity to use some device that will help me over a threatening difficulty. The very recognition of the introductory or intersyllabic *ah* as a device only emphasizes the fact that I am always mindful of possible stuttering, that I expect to encounter it, am afraid of it and try to avoid it. To speak of the "normal speech" of a stutterer is hazardous at best, for it is doubtful that I, at least, ever experience the complete freedom in speaking to which the normal speaker is accustomed. Even though the articulation may appear unhampered, it is never certain that the mind is at ease in the matter.

This initiatory *ah* is very common among normal speakers, as a tonal perseveration or undertone, and in some cases assumes the importance of a defect. In some stutterers it becomes a rigid habit, and probably a habit of no real benefit. I doubt that it is in any sense a therapy; it seems at best, the substitution of one kind of stuttering for another.

Similar to this device is another which, with me, is rather a common practice. On the whole, initial sounds, that is, sounds at the beginning of words, offer greater difficulty than sounds within words, which are usually attended to without difficulty, due to vocal momentum—unless a sharp articulatory break occurs between syllables. Similarly, words

imbedded in a sentence offer less difficulty than words, even the same words, at the beginning of a sentence. Knowing this, I frequently back up, so to speak, and take a running start at sounds on which I expect to encounter difficulty, in order to permit the articulatory and vocal momentum to carry me over. That is, I repeat a great number of words. I go back several words to initiate the speaking function, and then, coming to the troublesome sound, I say it while the mechanism is thus in operation. This, too, it seems to me, may become a habit of no benefit, and is simply the substitution of one kind of speech defect for another. In my case, it is favorable to rapid speech; it tends to encourage, in fact, a manner of speaking that is perhaps too rapid.

Save in periods of relatively free articulation, or of pronounced stuttering, articulation is, with me, a conscious process. Suppose a man were to say that with him walking was deliberate, that he consciously set one foot before the other, that he did this to keep from falling. That would seem strange indeed. I do not know how much aware the normal speaker is of the position of his tongue and teeth and lips, for instance, during speech, but I am under the impression that he is very little aware of it. But I consistently "form" the sounds or sound combinations by deliberately placing my articulatory organs in the

positions where they function most effectively. This has been one of the teachings of expediency. It is a strategy designed to counteract the tenseness of the articulatory and general somatic musculatures, and involves an effort to maintain a calm state of mind and body.

An incident will illustrate what I mean. For two years I attended college in a little town, and each morning I walked about a half a mile to the college. On these morning walks I regularly met a certain elderly gentleman who walked in the opposite direction, and we came to exchange greetings. Upon seeing him approaching, I would consciously relax, place my lips together gently and put my tongue in the proper position; then, as he brushed past me, I would open my lips, release my tongue, and greet him, "Morning." On one occasion I lost control of my assumed poise, my jaws locked, my lips pursed tightly, and my tongue contracted rigidly. As my elderly friend walked by with a cheery "Good morning!" I was in the midst of a valiant struggle with that part of my anatomy involved in speech, and was forced to pass him with a silence that he must have mistaken for rudeness or deep thought. But when he was a short distance behind me, I suddenly won my fight, and the great effort with which I had been trying to speak caused me literally to shout into the

vacant street, "Morning!" He must have been quite perplexed.

It is to be understood, then, that this deliberate articulation results in success that ranges all the way from comparatively unhesitating speech to the various types of stuttering which I experience. A person to whom I am talking is probably seldom aware of what I am doing; even when I appear to be talking freely, I am stuttering inwardly to a considerable degree. This fact, which is true of other stutterers as well as myself, accounts in part for the popular notion that stutterers are rare; they conceal their defect in a number of ways, but the keen observer is aware that speech defectives are quite common.

When this enforced relaxation is employed throughout one's waking hours, more or less, it amounts to a considerable task. Regardless of its questionable therapeutic value, it is imposingly expedient, and whatever its relation may be to speech itself, it has other notable effects. The effect which it has on the entire organism, including the mind, only illustrates that speech is an extremely complicated function and not limited in any real sense strictly to the respiratory, vocal and articulatory mechanisms. This enforced calmness does have a real influence on the entire organism. It is an influence of discipline, that is chiefly restraint, but a

restraint that is after all commendable. Whatever may be the proper viewpoint to assume in the ancient argument by which Cotton Mather thundered his way to a dubious immortality, whether, that is, a man is born moral, immoral, or unmoral, the fact remains that the nature of man is such that he may vitiate his own best purpose and oppose his own well-being. The glaring fact that a man is capable of self-criticism and self-restraint may be the best argument upholding the wisdom of self-discipline. At all events, the man who sentences himself to an enduring tranquillity and calm is sure to gain many benefits; it is not even necessary to quote Aristotle in order to maintain that view. That the tranquillity be first imposed in order to avoid stuttering is a fact that becomes lost from the ultimate point of view of importance; the significant fact is that repose be imposed at all.

Surprise and bewilderment are the parents not only of a mysticism that may at times be a thing of beauty, but they are also the parents of a gruesome breed of superstitions, fears and unnecessarily weird forebodings. A calm view of life in the entire does not permit their tragedies to occur. Nor is tranquillity a passive resignation to fate. It is a state in which empathy for and harmony with nature at any given moment appear paramount. Joy and

ecstasy are not lost; they are merely transformed from jazz to symphony. Values are more deftly perceived in their true lights when one is unexcited. The poet, even in his wildest moments, is to be unmistakably distinguished from a party to a mob lynching. To say that a man is tranquil is to mean only that his organism is functioning in harmony as a whole, and in harmony with its environment; his synthesis is relatively near perfection. The chief reason why he should be in that state is that "it is better to be fully than partially alive."

The tremendous effect on the stutterer of conscious articulation is, then, not to be lightly thought of. To the extent that it is genuinely beneficial to the entire organism, it is valuable to the stutterer as a stutterer. But because the speech mechanism is comparatively integral in itself and dominates the production of speech, anything that improves the organism as a whole can have only an indirect and more or less superficial effect on the function of speech. In order to make this less an excursion into theory and more an approximation of fact, I must refer to my own experience. Conscious articulation has enabled me to conceal my defect to a large extent, because it has improved my speech to the degree that it has enabled me to speak without apparent difficulty. The emphasis is to be placed on

the word "apparent." For the consciousness of stuttering remains to some extent whether articulation is deliberate or haphazard. My speech is improved by the practice of deliberate articulation only in its outward manifestation. It has been only by getting at the basic neurology involved that my speech has been genuinely improved.

Also, it is not to be understood that this device renders speech significantly less difficult. As I said above, when this enforced relaxation is employed consistently, it amounts to a considerable task. The tendency to stutter is deeply rooted and has gained strength from long practice. To oppose it by an act of will is quite as strenuous as resignation to it. The fact must not be lost sight of that deliberate articulation is essentially stuttering; it is certainly not normal speech. It results usually in a hesitating, stumbling utterance, and in a very slow manner of speaking. By testing I have found that I speak at the rate of about fifty words a minute when employing this device, a speaking rate which is extremely below the average for normal speakers. Each word on which I would ordinarily stutter is spoken with effort and patience, and the hesitation involves an embarrassment on which I do not thrive. And it is not to be forgotten that speaking in this way is always attended by the fear and anxiety characteristic

of the anticipation of stuttering. Obviously, it is a dubious therapy.

A consideration of the mental and emotional phase of stuttering must necessarily be largely repetitious of much that I have stated in preceding pages. I have implied in cursory references something of the nature of the fear of stuttering and the awareness of it as a fact of life. The mental and emotional phase of the process varies not so much according to the type of stuttering or the sound being attempted as according to the social situation and the momentary state of my temperament and physical health.

In this connection I want to do something to dispel a doubt that seems to be current in some quarters, by saying that I do know exactly what I want to say when I attempt to speak. I know exactly what I want to say even in cases of the most severe stuttering. In my case, at least, there need be no argument whatever concerning that.

It is to be noted that I enter on an attempt to speak with a real intention of saying something. I want to express a thought in words. But it is rarely that I am at ease in this; I anticipate difficulty and put myself on guard to avoid it. If stuttering occurs, then, it is best thought of as a restraint on my justifiable desire to speak. Every student of psychology is familiar with the responses which restraint

of action tends to bring out in the individual. The pure response in such a situation is usually one of rage, but this might be modified considerably. When stuttering occurs, I am aware of an increased desire to speak, a desire which becomes determination. Sometimes it is elaborated into resentment of the thwarting influence, and envy of the normal speech of others. With this is blended a quality of shame; my speech inferiority is made obvious and I cannot be blind to the fact. It is this which is most instrumental in giving rise to embarrassment. The chief reason why it is embarrassing to stutter is that other people do not stutter. Perhaps, even, they are inclined to think it funny, or to have pity on me. At all events, any such attitude on their part puts an undue degree of importance on myself in the performance of what should be a simple and ordinary act.

I want to say, however, that with the increased understanding of my speech defect which I have come to enjoy, I have been able to dispense with much of this emotional disturbance in connection with stuttering. In fact, it is just at this point that I have been tremendously benefited; it is in this regard that my stuttering has lost much of its hold on me.

I think I have said quite enough about the physi-

cal phase of stuttering to establish its importance. To the person who has an eye merely for the obvious, stuttering is a speech defect. But in reality it is considerably more than that. Stuttering is a mental distraction and a physical drain on the energies of the individual. It interferes with his work in school especially, not only because it forces him to think of himself constantly as being something of an exile, but also because the process of stuttering makes him, in the moment of stuttering, far less capable of carrying on the thought processes than he otherwise would be. When one considers again that speech is the capacity which a man has to symbolize himself in sound and to translate himself into the understanding of others, that it is thus a deeply fundamental process and a function of the entire organism, one can better appreciate the significance of a speech defect. Stuttering is a constant mental and physical pain, and although the stutterer learns, in time, to regard this pain rather nonchalantly, it remains important and can never be wholly disregarded.

Its capacity for bringing about physical fatigue makes the matter of the stutterer's hygiene important. He generally requires more sleep than the normal speaker, and without it he is not only likely to stutter more severely, but he is likely to be less

efficient in any undertaking. A vicious circle might readily be set up, in that the stutterer is forced to work harder to overcome the physical and social handicap imposed upon him, and in working harder increases his fatigue, lowers his resistance, and invites the stuttering to make graver inroads upon his health and peace of mind. Adequate nourishment, exercise, fresh air, and rest are important prescriptions for him; at least, I have found that to be true. The matter of physical hygiene for the stutterer, however, is so important and so involved that it can only be mentioned here. It is a field for much separate significant research and publication, which should not be neglected.

Good mental hygiene is, in this regard, even more important. For example, stutterers have probably been really injured more by unenlightened school teachers than by any other class of people with whom they have been forced to come into contact. For nearly all stutterers go to school, and in school they are generally expected to compete on even terms with pupils who do not stutter. Even the most sympathetic teachers, being merely human, are guilty of numerous oversights. The special problems of the stutterer, concerning his participation in the social life of the school, are usually given little or no attention. Yet he cannot reasonably be expected to take

part in those games, which are so common, in which little rhymes are spoken or in which speaking of any sort is necessary. If the stutterer can play the piano or the mouth organ, or dance a jig, or build a good fire, he would no doubt be much happier doing those things at a school party. Personally, I have an intense dislike for "get-together" parties, hand-shaking orgies in which every one introduces himself to every one else. It is all but impossible for the stutterer to take part in such affairs.

In the classroom, moreover, the stutterer is usually expected to take part in oral recitation. In fact, certain writers on the subject of stuttering insist that stutterers should never be excused from oral recitation lest they develop bad habits and use their defect for the purpose of getting out of unpleasant tasks. What is the logic of it? Nobody insists that a lame boy be made to take part in the hundred-yard dash. It is reasoned that the stutterer should recite orally because he should face life as it is. That is not facing life as it is. That is not facing the obvious fact that the stutterer is not able to talk sufficiently well to make an oral recitation which does him justice. To really face the facts of life is to admit that the stutterer is after all a stutterer, just as a lame boy is, after all, lame. A great deal of careful study concerning the stuttering pupil is

needed, and the results of the study should be broadcast.

Indeed, I hope that whatever else I have accomplished by this self-study, I have suggested a number of vital problems of research. If, by that, I have to any degree stimulated the work being carried on in the field of speech pathology, my task has been worthwhile.

The stutterer, if I may speak for him as a type, does not want pity any more than he wants contempt, but he does want the understanding which the normal respect of one human being for another tends to make possible. He is a human being, trying to make a stutterer's adaptation to a world of glib speakers. He is an exile, trying not to be also a hermit. He wants only that for which men have always fought: the right to self-assertion tempered by justice, the human heritage.

(1)

THE END

Colophon

Because I Stutter
Wendell Johnson

Pipcub Editions

Restored from the 1930 D. Appleton and Company edition, with the introduction by Lee Edward Travis. Original dedication, acknowledgments, contents, introduction, text and pagination retained. Stamped title and binding leaves omitted. A historical personal account; its medical theories reflect the period.