

Chapter 1

The Drum-Major Instinct

In the islands of the South Pacific there was a time when isolated valleys could communicate with neighboring valleys only by means of runners - and drums. Picture it. Hear it in your mind. The little man, appropriately attired or painted, beating out a skillful tattoo on his drum. Calling men to the feast, to the celebration, to worship. Warning them of the approach of enemies. Or calling them to war.

If only he had a bigger drum. More people would come to the feast. More people would come to worship. More would be warned of enemy approach. Or more would join in the battle.

But what if he longed for a bigger drum only so that more people could watch him perform - and wonder at his skill?

There are drummers less primitive, with more sophisticated instruments of communication, who with the best of motives long for a bigger drum. But there are others who use the hypnotic beat to swell the count of spectators who watch their personal parade - the parade in which they twirl the drumsticks for the clicking cameras.

We are all born with the drum-major instinct. What baby, from the moment he makes his premiere performance, is not the center of attention? And what child does not try to keep it that way? If the real world does not have a big enough spotlight, he will turn to the world of fantasy. "All my dreams," said one little girl, "come out the same way. I'm always somebody important."

Do we ever quite grow out of it? Why do we want to paint or preach or sing? To help people, of course. Who would dare to suggest any other motive? Yet praise never makes us unhappy - even if we don't deserve it. We like the sound of it even when we don't believe it. It doesn't bother us at all unless we hear too much of it directed to somebody else.

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Madison Avenue knows all about the drum-major instinct. That's why we get letters that say. "You have been selected to receive the accompanying brochure because we have learned that you are a highly intellectual individual who is interested in world affairs, in good literature, in art and in science." Of course well read on. It describes us so precisely. That's the way we get hooked.

The drum-major instinct. The desire to be somebody. The urge to be important. That's why we Join exclusive clubs and drop names and drive expensive cars and put stickers on our luggage. That's why we eat at the best restaurants. That's why we collect ribbons and medals and trophies and degrees.

In a nation without a king there are thousands who try to be king anyway. They crave the pomp and pageantry that go with royalty. And so they beat their own drums and elbow themselves into high position, certain that fitness will come with landing the Job.

In the days of President Taft's administration a woman who knew the President personally kept urging him to appoint her husband to the post of Secretary of Commerce. Her husband was a house painter. The President tried tactfully to suggest that the job required a big man, a man with long preparation for its demands. But she saw no problem. It would all take care of itself. If the President would only appoint him to the position, he would be a big man!

Doesn't a big chair make a big man? Won't buying an organ make you an accomplished organist in two or three weeks? Won't buying the right camera make you an expert cameraman with all the creativeness of a Life magazine photographer? All you have to do is read the instructions!

This urge to be in the spotlight, to lead the parade, can get out of hand. It can work havoc with the personality. Some timid people become unpleasantly aggressive. And some are so tormented by being little that they boast themselves taller and taller until we pity them. Some try to get ahead by pushing other people back.

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Many a crime is committed by frustrated individuals who find no other way to get attention. With a gun in their hand they are fearless. Without it, they are frightened little men.

In Hitler and Mussolini the drum-major instinct went berserk. It is said that Mussolini, asked what his ambition was, replied, "I am obsessed by one wild desire. It consumes my whole being. I want to make a mark on my era with my will. A mark like this." And then with his fingernails he scratched the back of a chair from end to end. "Like the claw of a lion!"

And Hitler? He left a trail of blood and tears across Europe!

The drum-major instinct. Better known as pride.

Who was it who first allowed pride to grow in his heart? Grow to such an extent that he had to be cast out of heaven. He came to our planet where he has been practicing his trade for some 6000 years!

Look around you if you will. See the newest scars on this planet of ours. The most recent hurricane. The most devastating fire. The earthquake that is freshest in your mind. Multiply it all a thousand times. And multiply again. Pride did it.

Listen to the heartcry of a hurting world. A world of separations and good-byes. A world trying to understand the crashing planes, the loss of innocent children, the shattering of dreams. Take the hurts of your own heart. Multiply them by all that memory holds. And then by a planet. Pride did it.

Sense if you can the enormity of the mess we're in. Pride did it. That's how deadly it is. Pride in the heart of one angel. Pride is back of the whole show!

There isn't a soul who hasn't been touched by the contamination of pride. The fallen angel has instilled it into every heart, where it can be removed only by the miracle of divine surgery.

We are proud of how we look, proud of our accomplish merits, proud of our degrees. Proud of how young we are or how old we are or how many years we have worked. Proud that we aren't retired. Proud that we aren't stupid. Proud of how

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many miles we can jog. Proud of the important people we know. Proud of where we've been or where we are or where we are going. Some people are even proud of how bad they once were!

Have I missed anything? A few thousand things!

Every one of us would like to have a bigger drum. And we are sure our motives are right. We want it only so we can do more good. We have good news for the world. And we could tell it quicker and farther if we had a bigger drum!

But there is such a subtle line between wanting power for the sake of other people and wanting it for ourselves. It's a line so difficult to see!

I've never read a book about pride. Have you? But since pride got us into all this trouble, I thought there ought to be one.

So in these pages I'm going to throw out some missiles - not at proud people, but at pride itself. You can stay by and watch the fun if you like - and be glad the missiles aren't meant for you.

On the other hand, you just may discover that you are afflicted like the rest of us. If you do, I dare you to admit it and point your finger in reverse and do something about it!

By the way, along with the missiles there will be a lot of hope!

The way I see it is this. If these pages should lead even a few to defect from the camp of the proud and seek asylum among the humble, then the book won't have to be a best seller to be a roaring success!