

<<宽容>>

图书基本信息

书名：<<宽容>>

13位ISBN编号：9787302154372

10位ISBN编号：7302154376

出版时间：2007-7

出版时间：清华大学

作者：房龙

页数：354

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内容概要

《宽容》(Tolerance)是一部描写人类思想发展史、畅销近百年的通俗历史读本,是关于宽容和自由思想的人文主义经典之作,由荷兰裔美国著名历史学家、作家房龙著作而成。

他从人文主义的立场出发,探寻两千年来人类精神上“不宽容”的原因。

由于信仰、道德、风俗等的不同,人类形成了不同的利益群体,每个群体总是居住在壁垒森严的城堡里,用偏见和固执这个坚固的屏障抵御外界和外来的影响。

偏执和固执己见给人类带来了悲剧,致使众多杰出人物为了“宽容”的事业前仆后继。

他以深厚的人文关怀及倡导思想自由的精神解析了人类为寻求思想的权利所走过的艰辛历程,勾勒了一幅波澜壮阔的人类思想解放史,让我们重新发现和更深入地认识两千年来政治、宗教、文化、社会的曲折发展历史和人类寻求自身解放的漫长历程。

这本英汉双语版的经典之作,无论作为通俗的思想史读本,还是作为语言学习的课外读物,对当代中国的读者都将产生积极的影响。

为了使读者能够了解每段故事概况,提高阅读速度和阅读水平,在每篇英文故事的前面增加了中文导读。

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作者简介

作者：（美国）房龙亨德里克·威廉·房龙（Hendrik Willem Van Loon 1882——1944），美国作家，1882年出生在荷兰，他是出色的通俗作家，在历史、文化、文明、科学等方面都有著作，而且读者众多，他是伟大的文化普及者，大师级的人物。

[编辑本段]亨德里克·威廉·房龙的生平 房龙青年时期先后在美国康奈尔大学和德国慕尼黑大学学习，获得博士学位，房龙在上大学前后，屡经漂泊，当过教师，编辑，记者和播音员工作，在各种岗位上历练人生，刻苦学习写作，有一度还曾经专门从通俗剧场中学习说话技巧。

1913年起他开始写书，直到1921年写出《人类的故事》，一举成名，从此饮誉世界，直至1946年去世。

房龙多才多艺，能说和写十种文字，拉得一手小提琴，还能画画，他的著作的插图便全部出自自己手笔。

年轻时的房龙，因经济拮据，像一头大象一样鲁莽地闯入了出版界。

他指望出本书挣钱维持生活，并以此成为到大学谋个教职的资本。

但他选择的是写历史作品，当时没有人相信干这个能挣钱。

由博士论文改写的《荷兰共和国的衰亡》，因其新颖的风格颇受书评界的好评，但却只售出了不到700本，于是引来了出版商满怀怜悯的话语：“我想连在街上开公交车的也比写历史的挣得多。”

但有一位芝加哥的书评家却预言，要是历史都这么写的话，不久历史书将名列畅销书榜。

当一位出版商有了同样的先见之明，房龙一生的转折点便到来了。

这位出版商名叫霍雷斯·利弗奈特，房龙先后和他签约写了《文明的开端》、《人类的故事》、《圣经的故事》、《宽容》等等。

他们的合作历时10个年头。

《文明的开端》的意外热销已经表明霍雷斯·利弗奈特独具慧眼，而《人类的故事》不仅引来书评界的一片欢呼并获得最佳少儿读物奖，该书共印了32版，房龙本人的收益也不少于50万美元。

就连给这本书挑错儿的历史教授也不禁发出感叹：在房龙的笔下，历史上死气沉沉的人物都成了活生生的人。

也许是熟悉历史的缘故，房龙还是较早视希特勒上台为严重威胁的少数美国人之一。

1938年，他出版《我们的奋斗——对希特勒所著（我的奋斗）的回答》，摆出了与德国纳粹势不两立的架势。

在德国入侵他的故国荷兰、野蛮轰炸了他的出生地鹿特丹之后，房龙自称“汉克大叔”，在美国通过短波广播对被占领的荷兰进行宣传，以他特有的机智向受难的同胞传递了许多信息。

[编辑本段]亨德里克·威廉·房龙的主要著述及部分简介 房龙的主要著述有： 《荷兰共和国的衰亡》（1913） 《发现简史》（1917） 《古人类》（1920） 《人类的故事》（1921）

《圣经的故事》（1923） 《宽容》（1925） 《美洲的故事》（1927） 《制造奇迹的人》（1928）

《伦勃朗的生平与时代》（1930） 《房龙地理》（1932） 《艺术》（1937）

《太平洋的故事》（1940） 《约翰·塞巴斯蒂安·巴赫的生平与时代》（1940） 《托马斯·杰弗逊》（1943）

《西蒙·玻利瓦尔的生平与时代》（1943） 《房龙地理》： 《房龙地理》（即《人类的家园》），此书是美国的房龙于一九三二年所著，是一本不可多得的好书。

它的宗旨是“把所有的高山、城市、大海统统放进地图里，只告诉我们生活在那里的居民的情况，告诉我们他们为什么会居住在那里，他们来自哪里，他们在干什么——把人类关心的故事写进地理学”

换句话说，此书注重的是人文地理，他所讲的只是“告诉我们生活在那里的居民情况，告诉我们他们为什么会居住在那里，他们来自哪里，他们在干什么——把人类关心的故事写进地理学。”

一经他的渲染，平常我们看来很枯燥的地理知识，里面的山山水水，草草木木就显得栩栩如生。

历史发展到现在，已经注明人类居住的这个世界是太小了。

“环境保护”是现代工业发展到一定程度才提出的，房龙在书中多次指出，地理环境会影响人类的生存，反过来人类生活又会影响地球的环境，并用历史事实反复提醒人类应如何与地球友好相处，否则

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就会受到自然界的惩罚，他的这些观点都有相当的超前意识。

房龙以其广博的知识、独特的视角和娴熟的表达为我们树立了一个地理知识的范本。地理知识是公众所共同拥有的，为什么能冠上房龙的名字？

房龙地理自有其不同于别人之处。

房龙也是分国家来讲述地理，但他并不像杂货铺的老板那样，满足于陈列一个个国家的人口、面积等，他有意识地将人在地理中的活动贯穿在知识的介绍中。

这个国家的气候、地势如何，人们是怎样来适应自然、利用自然继而改造自然的；特定的环境中，人们选择了怎样特定的生活方式，继而是如何影响当地的风俗、历史的，最后形成这个独一无二的国家和民族的。

如果说以前的地理教科书是幻灯片的话，那么《房龙地理》就是一部活动的电影，里面的一切都栩栩如生，可触可感，呼之欲出。

《太平洋的故事》：《太平洋的故事》，喜欢探险的人可以读到15至18世纪欧洲人“地理大发现”中的所有重要的探险活动。

从1519年至1522年麦哲伦首次环海航行，到1642年至1643年艾贝尔·塔斯曼航行至澳大利亚、新西兰，从1728年白令穿越白令海峡，到1768年至1779年詹姆斯·库克先后三次环海航行。

喜欢地理的人，也可详尽地了解太平洋的经纬。

《人类的故事》：在选读房龙的著作时，虽然《发明的故事》的科学内涵，相比之下会更多一些，但其作品在世界上影响最大的还是他的成名之作《人类的故事》。

房龙的成名之作《人类的故事》，是写西方文明发展史，主要对象是少年。

这本书在1921年11月推出，立即成为畅销书。

房龙因此书曾获得美国图书馆协会和美国儿童读物协会颁发的两枚奖章，以表彰他在美国儿童读物领域“所作的杰出贡献”。

这本书的主要读者定位为少年儿童，实际上远远超过未成年少年儿童的阅读水平。

房龙写《人类的故事》时爱因斯坦的相对论还没有深入人心（尽管爱因斯坦早在1905年就提出相对论，但即使他在1921年获得了诺贝尔物理奖，人们还是没有真正认识到相对论的价值），许多人都认为经典物理已经达到科学的顶峰，人类社会也已经发展到了某种极限，而房龙却这样预言未来：“到了公元10000年……他们（指我们的后代）会把拿破仑……和成吉思汗或马其顿的亚历山大混为一谈。

刚刚结束的世界大战会被他们当作罗马和迦太基之间的长期商业冲突……甚至值得我们骄傲的医院、实验室和手术室看上去也不过是稍加改进的炼金术和中世纪医生的工作间。

”因此现代人并不值得骄傲自大。

房龙揭示了欧洲爆发的第一次世界大战的根源。

他提出，我们时代的发展特点是物质文明远远走在精神文明前面，“科学家们开始制造钢铁、化学、电的新世界，却忘了人类思维比那个谚语中的乌龟要迟缓”。

于是“这个笨拙的中世纪机构突然应时代要求去处理机械、工业世界的高度现代化问题，它就被迫根据数世纪之前定下的游戏规则尽其所能地去做了。

”《圣经的故事》、《人类的故事》、《宽容》并列为房龙的三大名著，自出版以来，一直饱受赞誉，传读不衰。

《美国的故事》：房龙在《美国的故事》中，以其渊博的学识，简洁、流畅的笔触叙述了从哥伦布发现新大陆至20世纪30年代在北美大陆上的风云变幻。

对美利坚合众国的形成、诞生和发展叙述颇详。

对历史事件，西方文明、科技发明对人类生活的影响、美国的政治生活都有详尽的阐述，内容丰富、资料翔实、涉及范围广泛、知识量大，非一般美国历史书籍所能及。

本书文笔生动、活泼，写人记事，栩栩如生，不乏奇文妙语，读来饶有趣味。

《与伟人谈心》：《与伟人谈心》一书内容涉及文学、历史、哲学、宗教、政治、音乐、地理等知识领域，同时，时间跨度也是相当大的。

在《与伟人谈心》一书中，作者凭借自己丰富的想象力，不拘时空限制，采用古今对话的形式，介绍

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了几十位在人类历史上颇具影响的人物。

这本书通过对邀请历史人物出席晚宴的情景描写，生动地烘托出了这些人物的生平事迹、思想观念、生活习惯和性格特征。

房龙的《与伟人谈心》写作风格很独特。

在历史事件和历史人物的铺述基础上不露声色地表达出自己的人生观和针对现实社会问题的思考，可谓《与伟人谈心》的最大特色。

从文学的角度看该书确有一定的研究与欣赏价值。

并且，读一读这本书，既可以大致了解一批著名历史人物的情况，了解一些他们生存年代的社会背景，又可以补充人类文化方面的知识。

[编辑本段]对亨德里克·威廉·房龙影响与评价 褒扬 许多青少年就是在房龙著作的陪伴下成长起来的。

房龙著作文笔优美，知识广博，其中不乏真知灼见。

干燥无味的科学常识，经他的手笔，无论大人小孩，读他的书的人，都觉得娓娓忘倦了，在茶余饭后，得到一点科学常识。

他为世人留下了30多部作品，而且每部书都由他自己画了插图，这些房龙风格的插图也是宝贵的遗产，并影响着后来的科学作家。

例如著名的科学家和科普作家、美国的盖莫夫，也是学着房龙的样子，为自己的作品画插图。

他的著作包括《宽容》、《人类的故事》、《文明的开端》、《奇迹与人》、《圣经的故事》、《发明的故事》、《人类的家园》、《伦勃朗的人生苦旅》等，贯穿其中的是理性、宽容和进步。

他的目标是向人类的无知和偏执挑战。

他采取的方式是普及知识与真理，使它们成为人所尽知的常识。

读房龙的书，对他亲手绘制的插图断不可视而不见。

相反，它们是房龙作品的一个组成部分，是文字难以替代的内容。

房龙的作品不仅是用青少年都能看懂的语言讲述了成年人也同样感兴趣的内容，更重要的是他把人类文明的进步与科学技术的发展相结合来讲述。

他实际上是大文化思想普及的先驱者。

他也是用文艺手法宣传科学的大师。

正如郁达夫先生所：“房龙的笔，有这样一种魔力，但这也不是他的特创，这不过是将文学家的手法，拿来讲述科学而已”。

应该指出，房龙对科普宣传和创作有着深刻的影响。

房龙为写作历史耗费了毕生的精力与健康，用他平易近人、生动流畅的文笔把高深、晦涩的历史知识和理解、宽容和进步的思想普及到广大普通读者中，向无知与偏执不懈地挑战，其精神与功绩都值得后世的赞扬。

关于房龙叙述历史的立足点，房龙始终站在全人类的高度在写作。

虽然作为一个过了20岁才移居美国的荷兰人，他不可避免地更多写到他熟悉的西方，也更钟情于他的故国，但他绝不是西方中心论者。

他一直在努力从人类的眼光来观察和叙述，超越地区的、宗教的、党派的和种族的偏见。

他反对任何形式的狭隘，包括那种为了给本民族增光而歪曲事实的超爱国主义 批评 有读者批评，房龙在1932年出版的《房龙地理》中，把中日两国比作一条船上的两位乘客，中国年迈体虚，却紧抱着一大包食物；日本血气方刚身强体壮却饥肠辘辘（见《房龙地理》第三十章《日本》）。

这句话显示了房龙认为日本对中国的侵略不可避免，且存在合理性。

与房龙对于几乎同一时期德国在欧洲的扩张和侵略所持的鲜明的批判态度（见房龙为驳斥希特勒的《我的奋斗》而写作的《我们的战斗》（1938））相比，从这一反差中可以看出房龙所宣扬的人文主义似乎本身就常伴随着欧洲中心主义，并具有虚伪和两面性。

同样是在《房龙地理》中，因其将西藏与中国分作独立的两章撰写，使得中国大陆的版本都以注释声明立场。

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章节摘录

无知的暴政 埃及仅存的神庙，坐落在菲莱小岛上。

从人类有历史记载以来，这座神庙就是祭拜伊西斯的，它的存在使这个小岛成为唯一能够理解古老而神圣的象形文字的场所，为数不多的僧侣们还在继续从事那些在埃及其他地方早已被忘却的活动。

公元527年，一个塞尔维亚农民成为东罗马帝国的统治者，他宣布神庙及附近的学园国有，僧侣和书写大师被投进了监狱，他们因饥饿、无人照料而死去，象形文字绘写手艺成了一门失传的艺术。

这种现象在古代社会的其他民族中也同样出现过。

古巴比伦人一方面极为宽容，鼓励僧侣们去研究天宇、探索陆地和海洋，同时仅因为自己的邻居违反那些在今天看来微不足道的宗教礼节，就对其大加惩罚。

我们的祖先为了方便的劫掠，派出了探险队，开始跟他们称之为“野蛮人”的人们打交道。

可怜的未开化的人们，误解了白人的企图，投出长矛和弓箭来欢迎他们，白人则用短枪报复。

从此，平静、无偏见的思想交流几无可能。

18世纪，让屠戮卢梭掀起了一次讨论，在讨论中野蛮人成了环境的不幸牺牲品，是人类种种美德的真正代表——这些美德已经被三千年堕落的文明制度剥夺殆尽。

这些认识一方面使我们得以一窥许多奇怪的被掩藏的人类天性，另一方面对人类所取得的丰功伟绩的赞赏，给我们以新的勇气面对未来，使我们能给自己落伍的远方表亲以更多的宽容。

宽容：允许别人有判断和行动的自由，耐心，不带任何偏见地容忍那些有别于自己或被普遍接受的观点、行为的人。

最近五十年来，置身于中非、极地、波利尼西亚土著居民中间的探险家、传教士和医生的研究，改变了我们往往认为的原始社会非常简单的观点。

原始人在焦虑中生活，在恐惧中死去。

为了成功，他不得不将自己的个性隐埋于部落的复合特性之中。

其他考虑都得服从于一个最高律令——生存。

由于原始人不理解因果法则，在他生活的世界中，过去、现在和将来混乱地交织在一起。

死去的人成了精灵，跟随着每一个人。

In the year 527 Flavius Anicius Justinianus became ruler of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. This Serbian peasant (he came from Uskub, the much disputed railroad junction of the late war) had no use for "booklearning." It was by his orders that the ancient Athenian school of philosophy was finally suppressed. And it was he who closed the doors of the only Egyptian temple that had continued to do business centuries after the valley of the Nile had been invaded by the monks of the new Christian faith. This temple stood on a little island called Philae, not far from the first great waterfall of the Nile. Ever since men could remember, the spot had been dedicated to the worship of Isis and for some curious reason, the Goddess had survived where all her African and Greek and Roman rivals had miserably perished. Until finally, in the sixth century, the island was the only spot where the old and most holy art of picture writing was still understood and where a small number of priests continued to practice a trade which had been forgotten in every other part of the land of Cheops. And now, by order of an illiterate farmhand, known as His Imperial Majesty, the temple and the adjoining school were declared state property, the statues and images were sent to the museum of Constantinople and the priests and the writing-masters were thrown into jail. And when the last of them had died from hunger and neglect, the age-old trade of making hieroglyphics had become a lost art. All this was a great pity. If Justinian (a plague upon his head!) had been a little less thorough and had saved just a few of those old picture experts in a sort of literary Noah's Ark, he would have made the task of the historian a great deal easier. For while (owing to the genius of Champollion) we can once more spell out the strange Egyptian words, it remains exceedingly difficult for us to understand the inner meaning of their message to posterity. And the same holds true for all other nations of the ancient world. What did those strangely bearded Babylonians, who left us whole brickyards full of religious tracts, have in mind when they exclaimed piously, "Who shall ever be able to understand the counsel of the Gods in Heaven?" How did they feel towards those divine spirits which they invoked so continually, whose laws they

endeavored to interpret, whose commands they engraved upon the granite shafts of their most holy city? Why were they at once the most tolerant of men, encouraging their priests to study the high heavens, and to explore the land and the sea, and at the same time the most cruel of executioners, inflicting hideous punishments upon those of their neighbors who had committed some breach of divine etiquette which today would pass unnoticed? Until recently we did not know. We sent expeditions to Nineveh, we dug holes in the sand of Sinai and deciphered miles of cuneiform tablets. And everywhere in Mesopotamia and Egypt we did our best to find the key that should unlock the front door of this mysterious store-house of wisdom. And then, suddenly and almost by accident, we discovered that the back door had been wide open all the time and that we could enter the premises at will.

But that convenient little gate was not situated in the neighborhood of Akkad or Memphis. It stood in the very heart of the jungle. And it was almost hidden by the wooden pillars of a pagan temple. * * *

* * * * * Our ancestors, in search of easy plunder, had come in contact with what they were pleased to call "wild men" or "savages." The meeting had not been a pleasant one. The poor heathen, misunderstanding the intentions of the white men, had welcomed them with a salvo of spears and arrows.

The visitors had retaliated with their blunderbusses. After that there had been little chance for a quiet and unprejudiced exchange of ideas. The savage was invariably depicted as a dirty, lazy, good-for-nothing loafer who worshiped crocodiles and dead trees and deserved all that was coming to him. Then came the reaction of the eighteenth century. Jean Jacques Rousseau began to contemplate the world through a haze of sentimental tears. His contemporaries, much impressed by his ideas, pulled out their handkerchiefs and joined in the weeping.

The benighted heathen was one of their most favorite subjects. In their hands (although they had never seen one) he became the unfortunate victim of circumstances and the true representative of all those manifold virtues of which the human race had been deprived by three thousand years of a corrupt system of civilization. Today, at least in this particular field of investigation, we know better. We study primitive man as we study the higher domesticated animals, from which as a rule he is not so very far removed. In most instances we are fully repaid for our trouble. The savage, but for the grace of God, is our own self under much less favorable conditions. By examining him carefully we begin to understand the early society of the valley of the Nile and of the peninsula of Mesopotamia and by knowing him thoroughly we get a glimpse of many of those strange hidden instincts which lie buried deep down beneath the thin crust of manners and customs which our own species of mammal has acquired during the last five thousand years. This encounter is not always flattering to our pride. On the other hand a realization of the conditions from which we have escaped, together with an appreciation of the many things that have actually been accomplished, can only tend to give us new courage for the work in hand and if anything it will make us a little more tolerant towards those among our distant cousins who have failed to keep up the pace.

This is not a handbook of anthropology. It is a volume dedicated to the subject of tolerance. But tolerance is a very broad theme. The temptation to wander will be great. And once we leave the beaten track, Heaven alone knows where we will land. I therefore suggest that I be given half a page to state exactly and specifically what I mean by tolerance. Language is one of the most deceptive inventions of the human race and all definitions are bound to be arbitrary. It therefore behooves an humble student to go to that authority which is accepted as final by the largest number of those who speak the language in which this book is written. I refer to the Encyclopedia Britannica. There on page 1052 of volume XXVI stands written: "Tolerance (from Latin tolerare—to endure):—The allowance of freedom of action or judgment to other people, the patient and unprejudiced endurance of dissent from one's own or the generally received course or view." There may be other definitions but for the purpose of this book I shall let myself be guided by the words of the Britannica.

And having committed myself (for better or worse) to a definite policy, I shall return to my savages and tell you what I have been able to discover about tolerance in the earliest forms of society of which we have any record.

It is still generally believed that primitive society was very simple, that primitive language consisted of a few simple grunts and that primitive man possessed a degree of liberty which was lost only when the world became "complex." The investigations of the last fifty years made by explorers and missionaries and doctors among the aborigines of central Africa and the Polar regions and Polynesia show the exact opposite. Primitive society was

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exceedingly complicated, primitive language had more forms and tenses and declensions than Russian or Arabic, and primitive man was a slave not only to the present, but also to the past and to the future; in short, an abject and miserable creature who lived in fear and died in terror. This may seem far removed from the popular picture of brave redskins merrily roaming the prairies in search of buffaloes and scalps, but it is a little nearer to the truth.

And how could it have been otherwise? I have read the stories of many miracles. But one of them was lacking; the miracle of the survival of man. How and in what manner and why the most defenseless of all mammals should have been able to maintain himself against microbes and mastodons and ice and heat and eventually become master of all creation, is something I shall not try to solve in the present chapter. One thing, however, is certain. He never could have accomplished all this alone. In order to succeed he was obliged to sink his individuality in the composite character of the tribe. Primitive society therefore was dominated by a single idea, an alloverpowering desire to survive. This was very difficult. And as a result all other considerations were sacrificed to the one supreme demand—to live. The individual counted for nothing, the community at large counted for everything, and the tribe became a roaming fortress which lived by itself and for itself and of itself and found safety only in exclusiveness. But the problem was even more complicated than at first appears. What I have just said held good only for the visible world, and the visible world in those early times was a negligible quantity compared to the realm of the invisible. In order to understand this fully we must remember that primitive people are different from ourselves. They are not familiar with the law of cause and effect.

If I sit me down among the poison ivy, I curse my negligence, send for the doctor and tell my young son to get rid of the stuff as soon as he can. My ability to recognize cause and effect tells me that the poison ivy has caused the rash, that the doctor will be able to give me something that will make the itch stop and that the removal of the vine will prevent a repetition of this painful experience. The true savage would act quite differently. He would not connect the rash with the poison ivy at all. He lives in a world in which past, present and future are inextricably interwoven. All his dead leaders survive as Gods and his dead neighbors survive as spirits and they all continue to be invisible members of the clan and they accompany each individual member wherever he goes. They eat with him and sleep with him and they stand watch over his door. It is his business to keep them at arm's length or gain their friendship. If ever he fail to do this he will be immediately punished and as he cannot possibly know how to please all those spirits all the time, he is in constant fear of that misfortune which comes as the revenge of the Gods.

He therefore reduces every event that is at all out of the ordinary not to a primary cause but to interference on the part of an invisible spirit and when he notices a rash on his arms he does not say, "Damn that poison ivy!" but he mumbles, "I have offended a God. The God has punished me," and he runs to the medicine-man, not however to get a lotion to counteract the poison of the ivy but to get a "charm" that shall prove stronger than the charm which the irate God (and not the ivy) has thrown upon him. As for the ivy, the primary cause of all his suffering, he lets it grow right there where it has always grown. And if perchance the white man comes with a can of kerosene and burns the shrub down, he will curse him for his trouble. It follows that a society in which everything happens as the result of the direct personal interference on the part of an invisible being must depend for its continued existence upon a strict obedience of such laws as seem to appease the wrath of the Gods. Such a law, according to the opinion of a savage, existed. His ancestors had devised it and had bestowed it upon him and it was his most sacred duty to keep that law intact and hand it over in its present and perfect form to his own children.

This, of course, seems absurd to us. We firmly believe in progress, in growth, in constant and uninterrupted improvement. But "progress" is an expression that was coined only year before last, and it is typical of all low forms of society that the people see no possible reason why they should improve what (to them) is the best of all possible worlds because they never knew any other. * * * * *

Granted that all this be true, then how does one prevent a change in the laws and in the established forms of society? The answer is simple. By the immediate punishment of those who refuse to regard common police regulations as an expression of the divine will, or in plain language, by a rigid system of intolerance. *

* * * * * If I hereby state that the savage was the most intolerant of human beings, I do not mean to insult him, for I hasten to add that given the circumstances under which he lived, it was his

duty to be intolerant. Had he allowed any one to interfere with the thousand and one rules upon which his tribe depended for its continued safety and peace of mind, the life of the tribe would have been put in jeopardy and that would have been the greatest of all possible crimes. But (and the question is worth asking) how could a group of people, relatively limited in number, protect a most complex system of verbal regulations when we in our own day with millions of soldiers and thousands of policemen find it difficult to enforce a few plain laws? Again the answer is simple. The savage was a great deal cleverer than we are. He accomplished by shrewd calculation what he could not do by force. He invented the idea of "taboo." Perhaps the word "invented" is not the right expression. Such things are rarely the product of a sudden inspiration. They are the result of long years of growth and experiment. Let that be as it may, the wild men of Africa and Polynesia devised the taboo, and thereby saved themselves a great deal of trouble. The word taboo is of Australian origin. We all know more or less what it means. Our own world is full of taboos, things we simply must not do or say, like mentioning our latest operation at the dinner table, or leaving our spoon in our cup of coffee. But our taboos are never of a very serious nature. They are part of the handbook of etiquette and rarely interfere with our own personal happiness. To primitive man, on the other hand, the taboo was of the utmost importance. It meant that certain persons or inanimate objects had been "set apart" from the rest of the world, that they (to use the Hebrew equivalent) were "holy" and must not be discussed or touched on pain of instant death and everlasting torture. A fairly large order but woe unto him or her who dared to disobey the will of the spirit-ancestors. * * * *

* Whether the taboo was an invention of the priests or the priesthood was created to maintain the taboo is a problem which had not yet been solved. As tradition is much older than religion, it seems more than likely that taboos existed long before the world had heard of sorcerers and witchdoctors. But as soon as the latter had made their appearance, they became the staunch supporters of the idea of taboo and used it with such great virtuosity that the taboo became the "verboten" sign of prehistoric ages. When first we hear the names of Babylon and Egypt, those countries were still in a state of development in which the taboo counted for a great deal. Not a taboo in the crude and primitive form as it was afterwards found in New Zealand, but solemnly transformed into negative rules of conduct, the sort of "thou-shalt-not" decrees with which we are all familiar through six of our Ten Commandments. Needless to add that the idea of tolerance was entirely unknown in those lands at that early age. What we sometimes mistake for tolerance was merely indifference caused by ignorance. But we can find no trace of any willingness (however vague) on the part of either kings or priests to allow others to exercise that "freedom of action or judgment" or of that "patient and unprejudiced endurance of dissent from the generally received cause or view" which has become the ideal of our modern age. Therefore, except in a very negative way, this book is not interested in prehistoric history or what is commonly called "ancient history." The struggle for tolerance did not begin until after the discovery of the individual. And the credit for this, the greatest of all modern revelations, belongs to the Greeks.

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