

**REACTIONS AND OTHER ESSAYS  
DISCUSSING THOSE STATES OF  
FEELING AND ATTITUDES OF  
MIND THAT FIND EXPRESSION IN  
OUR INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES**

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Reactions and Other Essays Discussing Those States of Feeling and Attitudes of Mind That Find Expression in Our Individual Qualities by John D. Barry

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# REACTIONS

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State of  
CALIFORNIA

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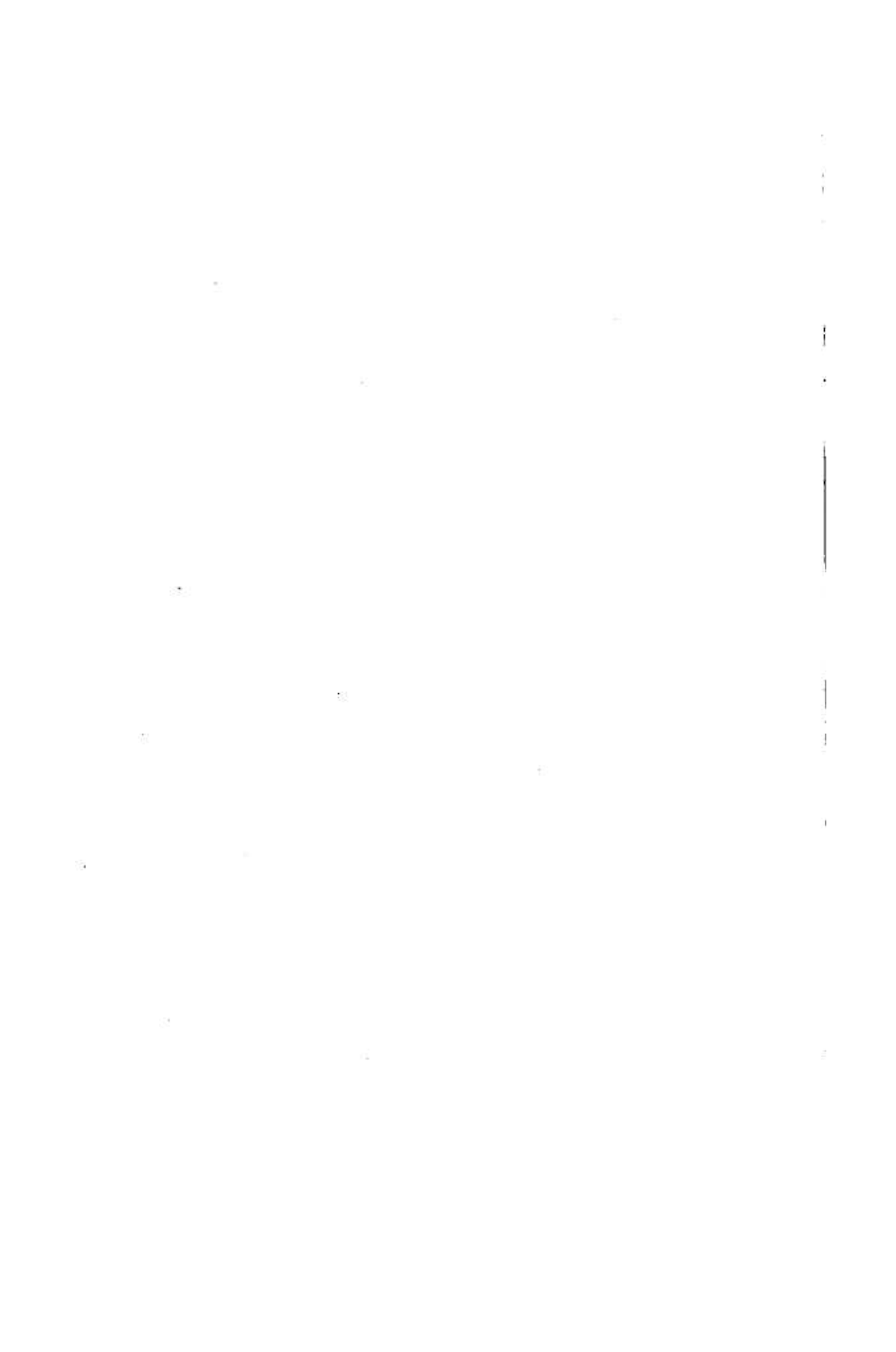
*These essays first appeared in the San Francisco Bulletin. They have since been revised and, to some extent, rearranged.*

*Class of 1897*

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To  
THE UNSEEN READERS

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## Preface

THESE essays are drawn from articles originally contributed during the past four years to the *San Francisco Bulletin*. They represent what is to me a most interesting period of my life when, from day to day, I have had the privilege of speaking to an audience representing many kinds of people. I realize, of course, that among the hundreds of thousands of *Bulletin* readers I can hope to reach only a portion. How large it is I cannot even estimate. But I know that the work has made for me friends I never see. Sometimes I hear of them indirectly. Occasionally they write me letters. The kind things they say are pleasant to hear; but pleasanter far is the consciousness that here and there, out in the mystery writers speak to, there are minds responding to mine, not always in agreement perhaps, but in sympathy. Some of them are not what the world calls educated, and for this reason their listening gives me not less satisfaction but more. It is to them that I should like to send my warmest greeting and my deepest thanks.

When I began to write my daily essay I wondered if some morning I might not discover that subjects had given out. Now I know that they are inexhaustible. The more one writes about the teeming life of humankind the more one finds to write about. There are times when so many subjects present themselves that I feel regret at not being able to keep up with them all. Then, too, many subjects are suggested by readers. Some of them, for one reason or another, I cannot use. Others are among the most serviceable.

*When readers compliment me on having so much to say I feel like smiling. They have just as much to say. Some of them have more. We all live in an ocean of thoughts. Through the air they are continually floating. To catch them one does not need to be a writer. For writing represents only one kind of expression. Besides, the most thoughtful people are often those who take in most and say least. In the silence they may receive messages that seldom or never reach our ears, that they express mainly, perhaps wholly, by their living.*

*Thoughts are common property. Many of those I express in this volume have been given to me by others, both consciously given and unconsciously. If a writer depended on his own thoughts alone he would be in a plight. Perhaps there is no such thing as one's own thoughts. Whatever we think that is worth thinking at all is valuable as it serves. Our best thoughts are likely to be those other people are thinking and have long thought, perhaps for generations. To keep a good thought to oneself, to lock it up in consciousness, is to change its nature.*

*What I express here is finding expression all about us. It is part of the thinking and feeling of the world to-day. For this reason, maybe for this reason alone, some readers have responded to it and found in it the pleasure of verification. Most of us like to read what we already believe, not through vanity alone, but through our desire to reach out to spirits akin to ourselves.*

*In this volume I touch on many subjects that perplex those much wiser than I am and much more capable of offering counsel. My excuse is that I do not claim to solve problems or to possess any special clues to guidance. What I like best to do is*

to talk things over. If the reader will talk with me and agree or disagree according to his choice I shall be satisfied. For some readers the best a writer can do is to express what they would like to express if they happened to be writers. Some of the most cheering letters I receive come from readers who in words I have used have found echoes of their own thinking.

To a writer, going on from week to week and from year to year, one of the greatest rewards lies in discovering his own inconsistency. The opinions that he expressed so confidently last year he may repudiate now by expressing views curiously different or wholly antagonistic. If such were not the case he might well be concerned about himself and ask what could be the causes that were keeping him from growth.

To speak to an audience day after day for a long period is to find out something about oneself. So often we don't know just what we think or feel about this subject or that till we have occasion to marshal our views and to put them into words. Then we discover that beneath the outer crust we call the self there lies another consciousness that, when it cares enough, comes forward and dictates our ideas. All that time, of course, it has been down there, and, silently and seemingly without effort, it has been doing its own feeling and thinking. When it takes possession of us we writers are likely to do our best work. Secretly we may be both surprised and pleased. We may even be a little awed. We have gone beyond ourselves. Perhaps the simple truth is that we have tapped something of the world-consciousness which expresses the deep lying forces we understand so little and are destined to prize more and more.