

The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk

[Photo of Haldeman-Julius appears above the title. The explanatory paragraph below appears at the bottom of the first column of p. 155.]

Title-page photo: Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, Girard publisher, hoped his Little Blue Books would be a "Democracy in Books," giving all Americans, especially the poor, the opportunity for the kind of educational self-improvement that would one day enable them to enjoy fuller lives of individual freedom and personal happiness. This photograph was taken in the study of his home in September, 1950.

EMANUEL HALDEMAN-JULIUS hoped posterity would one day remember him as the Voltaire of the English language. Contemporaries called the Kansas publisher the "Book Baron," the "Henry Ford of Publishing," and the "Erasmus of the Twentieth Century." From 1919 until 1951, the Haldeman-Julius Press of Girard, printed more than 500,000,000 of the famous Little Blue Books in over 6,000 different titles [1] At the time of the editor's death in July, 1951, the Haldeman-Julius Press published more titles and volumes than any other company in the world. [2]

People of many nations and from all walks of life ordered the small, inexpensive books. Charlie Chaplin and Gloria Swanson read Little Blue Books. The Haldeman-Julius company received orders from as far away as China, India, the Arctic Circle, and Siam. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie's order included two crossword puzzle books, a joke book, and *What Every Married Woman Should Know*, one of William John Fielding's books on sex education [3] Little Blue Books traveled with missionaries to Africa, India, and South America. In 1929 Adm. Richard Byrd took 1,500 Little Blue Books with him to the South Pole. The set included Thoreau's *On Walking* and Jack London's *The Big Snow*. [4] As recently as 1969, Norman Tanis, director of libraries at the Kansas State College of Pittsburg, sent Little Blue Books to accompany American astronauts on their lunar orbital mission. Although NASA fire regulations prevented a space voyage for such selections as William Butler Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* and Jules Verne's *Is There Any Life on the Moon?* Col. Frank Borman thanked Tanis for the books, noting, [155/156] "They are quite good, however, and make excellent reading material right here on earth." [5] Although many people read Little Blue Books for entertainment, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius never viewed them simply as cheap amusement. He saw them as a way of promoting individual freedom and human happiness by exposing the ignorance and intolerance which he thought so characteristic of the world in general and American society in particular. "The trouble with this world," he once complained with his usual candor, "is that it's too full of bull." [6] And so it was during the 1920's—when Prosecuting Attorney William Jennings Bryan succeeded in convicting young John Scopes for teaching evolution in Dayton, Tenn.; when Sinclair Lewis's George Babbitt was walking up and down the streets of Zenith condemning Americans of foreign birth; when the powerful Ku Klux Klan was killing Catholics and black men—it was during these years that the Kansas publisher launched an all-out war on bigotry and bunk. Throughout his life, Haldeman-Julius attacked ignorance with both hatred and humor. "Debunking is both a serious and amusing job," he wrote in 1928. "It is serious, because a world run by bunk suffers inevitably from bad management; it is amusing, because one can scarcely help laughing at the ridiculous nature of bunk." [7]

EMANUEL HALDEMAN-JULIUS was born Emanuel Julius on July 30, 1889, in Philadelphia. In marrying Anna Marcet Haldeman in June, 1916, he hyphenated his surname. Haldeman-Julius's parents were Ukrainian Jews who had immigrated to America in 1882 to escape the brutal anti-semitism of tsarist Russia.

Unfortunately, we do not know a great deal about the Kansas publisher's childhood, as he avoided discussing it. His first wife Marcet observed in 1924, "About his boyhood he is—to the world at large—consistently and intentionally evasive." [8] We do know, however, that Emanuel was the third of six children. His father, David Julius, was a low-paid Philadelphia bookbinder whom Emanuel once described as a "precise craftsman who always took immense pride in his work." [9] After meeting David Julius in 1920, Marcet remarked, "I am quite positive it is from his father Emanuel gets his love of beautiful formats and his ability to push aside obstacles, to believe in himself, to accept his own, instead of others' estimates of his achievements." [10] Of his early relationship with his father, Haldeman-Julius once wrote:

My father and I were always on the best kind of terms. I liked to talk with him, for I always was amused by his dry, wry, sarcastic wit. He had the knack of disposing of great issues with a devastating sentence or phrase. When he disliked a person he had the actor's trick of merely repeating what the offensive individual said, with just enough artistry in the voice to make the objectionable one ridiculous in the eyes of all right-minded people. [11]

Discussing his mother, Elizabeth Zamost Julius, the publisher recalled, "My mother . . . was given to bursting into a torrent of words—streams of hundreds of words—that would tear a fake or piece of bunk to shreds. She hated persecution, prejudice and oppression." [12] In fact, he declared, "I look on her as the first debunker who ever came into my life." [13] Both Haldeman-Julius's parents were readers, especially his mother. We do not know their literary tastes, nor what they encouraged their children to read. It is quite possible that the Talmud was regularly read in the Julius home, as Emanuel's mother was descended from a long line of rabbis. [14]

To a great extent, Haldeman-Julius was a self-educated man; he completed only the eighth grade and a few night-school courses. When he was 12, he walked into a Philadelphia secondhand bookstore and bought two cheap pamphlets—*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam* and Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The pamphlets cost 10 cents each. Years later, remembering first reading *The Ballad of*

Reading Gaol, he recalled, "I'd been lifted out of this world—and by a 10¢ booklet. I thought then how wonderful it would be if thousands of such booklets could be picked up easily and [156/157] inexpensively whenever one wanted to buy them." [15]

Books helped Haldeman-Julius escape from what was in fact an unhappy homelife. Discussing her husband's childhood, Marcet noted that "as a boy he was ill-at-ease in his home; out of tone with his surroundings—surroundings which breathed an essentially old world atmosphere while he was all palpitating impatience." [16] She further stated, "His boyhood was full of mental and spiritual conflicts." [17] Outside of the home, the young Haldeman-Julius was continually persecuted by Irish Catholic children who accused him of being a "Christ-killer." [18] In fact, the reason the Kansas publisher's nose was slightly bent was that it was once broken in a street fight with Irish Catholics.

Perhaps Haldeman-Julius blamed his family for the pain he suffered as a Jew. In leaving home at the age of 15, was he trying to escape from his immigrant Jewish background? In later years, the agnostic Kansas publisher briefly described his parents, yet failed to mention that they were Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. Indeed, he said nothing of his own Jewish heritage. [19]

Was Haldeman-Julius really trying to escape the authority of parents whom he considered tyrannical? In 1922 the publisher and his wife collaborated on *Dust*, a novel about the grim life of Kansas farmer Martin Wade, his wife Rose, and son Billy. As a boy, Haldeman-Julius was forced by his father to do "everything from carrying coal to wiping dishes." [20] Similarly, Billy Wade was forced by his father to do a variety of farm chores both before and after school. In one episode in the novel, the 15-year-old Billy refused to come home immediately after school. Instead, the boy read a book at the town library, ate dinner at a restaurant, and went to a movie. Returning home in the evening, Billy declared independence from his mother and father in the following scene:

"Billy, dear, what *did* happen?" She was beginning to feel panicky; he was courting distress.

"Nothing, mother. I just felt like staying in the reading-room and reading—"

"Oh, you *had* to do some lessons, didn't you! Miss Roberts should have known better—"

"I didn't have to stay in—I wanted to."

Martin still kept silent, his eyes looking over the newspaper wide open, staring, the muscles of his jaw relaxed. The boy was quick to sense that he was winning—the simple, non-resistance of the lamb was confounding his father.

"I wanted to stay. I read a book, and then I took a walk, and then I dropped in at the restaurant for a bite, and then I walked around some more, and then I went to a movie."

"Billy, what are you saying?"

Martin, slowly putting down his paper, remarked without stressing a syllable:

"You had better go to bed, Bill; at once, without arguing."

Bill moved towards the parlor, as though to obey. At the door he stopped a moment and said: "I wasn't arguing; I was just answering mother. She wanted to know."

"She does not want to know."

"Then I wanted her to know that I don't intend to work after school anymore. I'll do my chores in the morning, but that's all. From now on nobody can *make* me do anything." [21]

At the age of 15, both Emanuel Haldeman-Julius and fictional character Billy Wade voluntarily left home to earn their own livings. Marcet reported that her husband's visits home were "so infrequent as to be negligible." [22] Indeed, she met David Julius and his wife for the first time four years after her marriage to their son.

LEAVING home in 1904, Emanuel went to New York City, and eventually got a job in Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson as a bellboy at Miss Mason's School for Girls, an institution which he later characterized as "a seminary of 400 virgins, being processed and conditioned to become wives of New York's idle rich roués." [23] It was while working at Miss Mason's School that Haldeman-Julius first began serious reading. [24] Under the guidance of the school's woman librarian (whose name he failed to mention in later years), Emanuel wrote a number of newspaper articles on socialist themes. [157/158]

Study at Miss Mason's School paid off, for in 1906 Haldeman-Julius was hired as a writer for the *New York Call*, a socialist daily in New York City. The young journalist joined the Socialist party in the same year. Shortly after beginning work with the *Call*, however, he accepted a job in Milwaukee with another socialist paper, *The Daily Leader*. Employed by the *Leader* for two years, Emanuel wrote articles on a variety of subjects, including politics, art, literature, and philosophy. While in Milwaukee, he worked alongside *Leader* writer Carl Sandburg, whom Haldeman-Julius considered tiresome and dull-witted. [25]

In 1908 Emanuel left the *Daily Leader* to join the staff of the *Chicago World*, and later moved on to the *Citizen* and the *Western Comrade* in Los Angeles. In July, 1914, he was rehired by his old employer the *New York Call* to become its Sunday editor and drama critic. That same year the *Call's* senior editor, Louis Kopelin, left New York to work on the staff of the *Appeal to Reason*, a socialist newspaper in Girard. In the fall of 1915, Kopelin asked Haldeman-Julius to come to Girard to join the *Appeal's* editorial staff.

When Emanuel joined the *Appeal to Reason*, it was America's leading socialist newspaper; in 1913, it enjoyed a circulation of over

750,000. As a young socialist, Haldeman-Julius ardently supported many party demands for economic reform, including the establishment of collective ownership of the railroads and the banking system, unrestricted suffrage for all men and women, the adoption of the graduated income tax, immediate government relief of the unemployed by means of public works projects, and numerous reforms involving factory legislation (the creation of the eight-hour workday and five-day workweek, the establishment of unemployment insurance, and the abolition of child labor). [26] Although Haldeman-Julius was to become a New Deal Democrat in the 1930's, he nevertheless retained many of the socialist views of his youth. Apparently denying his devotion to socialism, the Kansas publisher stated in 1928:

In my younger days I was a Socialist journalist. I mean this in a political and something of a fanatical sense. All young men who dream dreams are fanatics. When I was in my twenties Socialism was a more important issue, under that name, in America than it is now. People were interested in Socialism. It was being talked about. People wanted to read about it. But the interest passed, Socialism waned, until now it is really a dead issue from any bird's-eye point of view you may choose. [27]

Yet in 1931, two years after the stock market crash, he was writing in *Herbert Hoover—The Fatuous Failure in the White House*:

The one intelligent program, worthy of the scientific attitude which is gaining more and more respect in the modern age, is that our large and economically essential industries should be placed under social control; production should be fairly in harmony with distribution; our great machines should be constantly in operation and the people should be permitted to consume the output of these machines. There should be reasonable, socially efficient, continuous and secure exchange of labor. "Economic individualism" should be forgotten—it is false in theory and vicious in application—and we should have a system of economic common sense and collectivism. [28]

[Photograph appears in the middle of the above quotation.]

[158/159]

WHEN Haldeman-Julius joined the staff of the *Appeal to Reason* in 1915, he moved into a setting unlike that which he had known as a big-city journalist. Girard, in Crawford county, was a small town located in the southeastern corner of Kansas some 12 miles from Pittsburg and approximately the same distance from the Missouri state line. In 1920 the Girard population was slightly over 3,000. [29] The town's economy depended both on agriculture and mining. The opening of deep coal mines in the 1870's encouraged laborers of diverse na-

[caption with photo]
Appeal to Reason office, Girard. Kan.

nationalities to immigrate to the county. Austrians, Germans, Englishmen, Scots, Frenchmen, and other groups settled there. After 1900 large numbers of Italians moved into the area. In 1923 Haldeman-Julius and his wife Marcet described Crawford county in their one-act play *Embers*. Character Edward Evans, editor of a small-town Kansas newspaper, Says of "Fallon County":

In Fallon County, where jetty columns of smoke pour steadily from the coal shafts and, melting into plummy mists, float softly over the surrounding wheat fields; where the miner's rickety shanty squats next door to the comfortable, well-built farmhouse and in the pastures the Italians' goats graze side by side with the Holsteins of native Kansans; where, at evening, from between splendid walls of growing corn the farmers see the grimy miners clattering home in their little Fords; where men from twenty countries, speaking as many languages, mingle but seldom mix-in the county is to be found every brand of lawlessness from simple traffic in corn-whiskey to the most cold-blooded Black Hand murders. [30]

How did Haldeman-Julius, as a transplanted Easterner, view living in Girard? He wrote in 1928:

In different sections, different prejudices are cherished. In the East, there is a greater spirit of personal liberty, free thought and sophistication; but there is more stress laid upon social etiquette and what one shall wear. The reverse is true, say, in Kansas. It has not the free attitude of the East toward one's opinions and one's amusements; though I do not mean to imply that one cannot live freely, if one will, even in Kansas; but what is pleasantly true of Kansas is the prevalence of a more easy, democratic social atmosphere. [31]

On June 1, 1916, Emanuel married Anna Marcet Haldeman, the only child of Henry Winfield and Alice Addams Haldeman. Her father, a wealthy Girard banker, was educated as a physician at the University of Leipzig. Her mother was a sister of the renowned Jane Addams of Chicago's Hull House. At the age of 15, Marcet went east to boarding school, was graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1909, and studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. From 1910 to 1913 she acted in stock companies in the United States and Canada under the name of Jean Marcet. With the death of her parents, she left the stage to take over the family bank, the oldest bank in Crawford county.

Marcet was a "modern woman." She was a bank president, edited "The Bulletin" of the Kansas Bankers' Association in 1916 and 1917, and smoked cigarettes in a day when it was socially unacceptable for women to smoke. According to Marcet, her belief in female equality was the reason she and her husband hyphenated their surnames. She explained in 1924, "On Emanuel's part the addition of my name to his own was purely a response to an earnest wish of mine; a generous gesture acknowledging our full partnership." [32]

According to Gene DeGruson, curator of the "Haldeman-Julius Collection" at Pittsburg State University, it was Jane Addams who really wanted the surnames hyphenated. Jane was closely related to the Haldeman family; Henry Haldeman was not only her brother-in-law, but her cousin as well. Moreover, she regarded Marcet as her favorite niece. DeGruson notes that correspondence from Jane to her sister Alice Haldeman indicates that "Aunt Jane" did not want the "much-loved" Haldeman name lost in marriage. [33]

Whether Jane Addams was in fact the prime cause of the hyphenated surname, it cannot be denied that she exerted a remarkable influence in Girard. It was at her insistence that the Girard Public Library was founded in the 1890's. In 1915 Marcet established a miniature Hull House for miners' children at Radley, a small town east of Girard. Her purpose in providing baseball diamonds and holding dances at the house was to keep the children out of the local pool halls.

In 1919 Marcet provided her husband the funds to buy out the *Appeal to Reason*. Although the *Appeal* was soon renamed the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, the newspaper was "still socialistic, still on the fringe, but with a bit of Menckanism thrown in." [34] Although Haldeman-Julius admired H. L. Mencken's skill as a debunker, he thought one of Mencken's major failings was that the Baltimore editor basically "hated people." [35]

Marcet had more than a financial interest in this publishing venture. Besides the play *Embers* and the novel, *Dust*, she and her husband collaborated on another novel, *Violence* (1929). Both novels were translated into Russian. In addition, Marcet wrote several Little Blue Books of her own, including *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About* (1924), *Why I Believe in Companionate Marriage* (1927), *The Story of a Lynching* (1927), and *Famous and Interesting Guests at a Kansas Farm* (1936). She wrote articles for such magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*, and traveled to the Soviet Union in 1931 to report on the progress of the Russian Revolution for one of her husband's many publications, the *American Freeman*.

In addition to her professional career, Marcet cared for her daughter Alice, son Henry, and foster daughter Josephine. In fact, Marcet taught school for her own children as well as those of her neighbors at the Haldeman-Julius home, a 160-acre farm situated on the outskirts of Girard. A 1921 account described the nursery-school atmosphere of the home in the following manner:

Our farm is a jolly place with a cabin for the colored help, a bunk house for the two men who help on the farm. A little play house, slipper[y] slide and stream for the children, and best of all, in the winter, in the sunny nursery, a Montessori school to which the youngsters of the neighborhood come and which I teach myself. We have lots of dogs—at present six and five puppies, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guineas and have just bought a setting of peafowl eggs. The little calves, colts and pigs arrived in a delightfully exciting succession and it always amuses us when we realize that we get more when we sell a calf than when we sell a story. [36]

THE ACQUISITION of the *Appeal to Reason* in 1919 gave the Haldeman-Juliuses their own literary means of espousing what they believed was man's and woman's natural desire for personal freedom and happiness. "We are sure that freedom is the only hope for civilization," the publisher once wrote. "Only when the intellect of man is free can there be enlightenment and progress." [37] The Haldeman-Juliuses strongly believed in the liberty of all people, regardless of color, creed, or sex. Both believed that women had the right to an independent existence outside of marriage and the family.

The publisher and his wife continually fought against illiberalism, which they viewed as "the disposition of narrowness and ill will that impels man to interfere unfairly, officiously, mischievously with the lives of his fellow men." [38] Opposing censorship, they affirmed the right of individuals to read whatever they desired. Indeed, the Haldeman-Juliuses maintained that freedom of thought and rational inquiry were essential to human happiness. The Kansas editor declared in 1929:

Science and industrialism—materialism in all its manifestations, vastly accelerated and elaborated—have made the new world that we live in. It is a happier world, a healthier world, a more confident and energetic and questing world, a world that knows more of beauty and leisure and joy, and that is learning more—and learning it rationally—of culture. [39]

The Haldeman-Juliuses believed the major enemies of human happiness were "unreasonable" authority and superstition. In *Why I Believe in Freedom of Thought* (1930), the Girard publisher stated, "History impressively shows us the dangers of authority and superstition. It is by observing and reasoning and building carefully upon the facts of life that man progresses in civilized aims." [40] The following year he wrote, "What a terrible world in which the solemn face of authority no longer has its onetime awesome influence but instead provokes a smile or the swift, ringing laughter of derision!" [41]

Haldeman-Julius remarked in 1925 in *Brief Burlesques and Epigrams*, "We have gone through the Ice Age, the Stone Age, the Iron Age, and now we are in the Bone-Head Age." [42] In the publisher's opinion, bunk typified the "Bone-Head Age." He believed that by encouraging mankind to be ignorant and irrational, bunk was a primary obstacle to personal freedom and human happiness. As "unreasonable" authority pretending to represent truth and "goodness," bunk took a variety of forms. It often encouraged men to resort to violence rather than to resolve problems rationally. According to Haldeman-Julius, such "bunkist" doctrines as racial supremacy, patriotism, and religious superiority sought to "wring the heart, flush the cheek and moisten the eye; or, again, to set hearts afire, as the saying goes, to inspire clenched fists and flashing eyes; or, again, to induce an emotion of lazy surrender to what seems easy of belief because so many seem to believe it. . . ." [43]

The editor noted that bunk never appealed to the people's intelligence, but actually encouraged their provincialism and mediocrity. For example, he regarded motion pictures as "a tremendous force in holding down the American mind to the level of the obvious, cheap, superficial and essentially unimaginative." [44] Through its emotional appeal to tradition and the "Faith of Our Fathers," bunk sought "to sanction and support the continuance of human folly." [45] Haldeman-Julius noted that in commenting on geological investigation at the

1925 Scopes trial, Fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan proudly declared that it was "better to study the 'Rock of Ages' than to study the age of rocks." [46]

The Kansas publisher pointed out that bunk tried to satisfy "dull minds," was hostile to rational inquiry in any form, and, like Christianity, always threatened certain catastrophe if the thinking man rejected it. Based on emotional falsehood rather than rational truth, the "lurid prophecies of a debunked world" always asked such ominous questions as "What would a town be without churches?" or "How can we expect the world to go anywhere but to the devil when young people are so presumptuous, so poor in reverence, so perversely prone to disobedience in throwing overboard the ideas of their parents, their teachers, their preachers and daring to choose for themselves a philosophy of life?" [47]

In advocating rationality and intellectual freedom, Haldeman-Julius mercilessly ridiculed those ignorance-mongers whom he thought "worshipped at the Temple of Bunk." Certainly, the Girard editor did not hesitate to single out prominent Americans whom he considered purveyors of bunk, including:

Warren Harding	.....	an example of "fat-headed American mediocrity."
Calvin Coolidge	.....	an example of "thin-headed American mediocrity."
Herbert Hoover	.....	"the fatuous failure in the White House."
Henry Ford	.....	a man whose "opinion, on any really thoughtful subject of life, is worth less than the opinion of many a studious, well-read, bright mechanic in a Ford plant."

[161/162]

Will Rogers	.....	"a buffoon, who has lately emerged as actually —incredibly—a guide to the American people on subjects of politics, international relations, economics, morality and what-not."
William Jennings Bryan	.....	"a man who "had the very spirit of John Calvin."
Carl Sandburg	.....	"the worst singer of silly songs ever turned loose on culture-hungry club-women."
Pope Pius XI	.....	"an old bigot, a conceited and purblind ass, a superstition monger of the most revolting type."
Adolf Hitler	.....	"the mad homosexual."
Jack London	.....	an antisemite, "a brutal blonde beast of Nordic type, "fit only "to fire the furnaces of Hitler's crematory."
Father Charles Coughlin	.....	"the Rasputin of American democracy."
Harry Truman	.....	"the killer of the Rooseveltian New Deal." [48]

Haldeman-Julius's close friend Clarence Darrow once asked him, "If you take the bunk out of people, what have you left?" [49] The Kansas publisher admitted that the American public, preoccupied with amusement, had barely reached intellectual puberty. He noted, "'Let's have fun,' cry our boys and girls, our Babbitts and Rotarians, our Ku Kluxers and Masons, our Sewing Circles and Ladies' Aiders." [50] Haldeman-Julius reported in 1923, "The people are children. O[u]r average intelligence registers about thirteen years." [51] Indeed, he believed this low educational level made the American people particularly vulnerable to bunk, and thereby they promoted their own unhappiness. In 1917, he noted, bunk had enlisted American doughboys in a war to "make the world safe for democracy." Bunk fomented racial and religious strife. "Unreasonable" laws denied Americans the right to control their own lives. Censorship laws told them what they were not permitted to read. The prohibition amendment told them what they could not drink. Federal and state laws demanded severe punishment for persons found guilty of distributing literature specifically describing various methods of birth control. In short, Haldeman-Julius believed the American people's unquestioned obedience to "bunkist" authority had made countless lives miserable.

Yet even though the Girard publisher stated that "the people are children," he added, "It is not as hopeless as it seems." [52] Haldeman-Julius believed that if the educational level of the American public were raised, the people would begin to question what he considered unreasonable authority, would achieve greater personal freedom, and ultimately become happier. In fact, he was convinced that the America of the 1920's, embarrassed by its own ignorance, really wanted to be enlightened. As he explained in *America: The Greatest Show on Earth* (1928):

Philosophies, religions, literatures, foreign customs and views of government that were scarcely names—if they were that—before the World War, now arouse curiosity and are made familiar in a flood of books; more attention is given to foreign news; Americans are beginning, here and there in growing groups, to regard themselves as in some sort citizens of the

world. They are becoming more intelligently sensitive. They care more about the good opinion of the world. They do not wish to appear foolish, and many who were not intellectuals, who had no deep convictions about the issue, were ashamed of the ludicrous show of ignorance and bigotry in Dayton, Tennessee. [53]

"If American readers had been so shackled still that they would not read Thomas Paine and his sympathizers," the Kansas editor stated in 1928, "I might never have begun the Little Blue Books in the first place. I might have turned to the manufacture of chewing gum, or something equally free from intellectual dynamite." [54]

THE HALDEMAN-JULIUS Press published a variety of periodicals, including the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly, Monthly, and Quarterly*, the *American Freeman*, the *Debunker*, the *Militant Atheist*, and *Lives and Letters*. Shortly after buying out the *Appeal to Reason* in 1919, Haldeman-Julius published as his first two Little Blue Books literature he had [162/163]

[p. 163: full page Haldeman-Julius advert appears here. Caption follows:]

Haldeman-Julius established Little Blue Book shops in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Venice, Colo., but most customers bought their books directly from the Girard plant, responding to such advertisements as this which appeared in national magazines and big city newspapers.

[164] once bought as a boy in Philadelphia bookstore—*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The title of the book series varied, from the *Appeal to Reason Pocket Series*, the *People's Pocket Series*, and the *Ten Cent Pocket Series*. In 1924 the short publications were renamed the Little Blue Books. The covers of the early books were blue, their size three and one-half by five inches, and their average length 64 pages.

Haldeman-Julius recalled in later years,

I thought that it might be possible to put books within the reach of everyone, rich or poor, though mostly poor—books that they would want, and which they would choose for the sake of the books alone. By that I mean that I dreamed of publishing in such quantities that I could sell them at a price which would put all books on the same cost level. [55]

The first two Little Blue Books were offered to the subscribers of the *Appeal to Reason* at a cost of 250 apiece. The books later sold at a price of five for a dollar, 10 cents, five cents, and by 1942 for as low as two and one-half cents (a limited offer). By the end of the 1920's, the Girard publisher could rightfully claim that his business was, indeed, the "Democracy in Books." Yet why were they so popular? Haldeman-Julius explained in 1923:

The success of the little blue books in the five-cent Pocket Series has proved the aptitude of the workers for the classics. The reason is apparent. Here are books that are so cheap that the poorest worker can afford to buy them; they are short, so that he can easily spare the time to read them; they are convenient in size, so that he can carry them in his pocket to be read on the way to work, during the lunch hour, any time that he has a few minutes unoccupied. [56]

By 1923 Little Blue Books were sold in 500 different titles. That same year, English novelist and essayist John Cowper Powys, himself an author of 10 Little Blue Books, wrote, "The genuine popularization of excellent literature has now emerged from the heart of Kansas as an established fact." [57] Little Blue Books were advertised under such headings as "IMPROVE YOURSELF!" in the *New York Times Book Review*, *Life*, *Harper's*, *Liberty*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *The Nation*. Haldeman-Julius established Little Blue Book shops in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Venice, Colo. Most customers, however, bought their Little Blue Books directly from the Girard plant. By 1928 orders were coming into Girard at a summer average of 2,500 a day, a winter average of 4,000.

Many prominent literary figures wrote Little Blue Books. Anna Louise Strong was the author of a special set on life in the Soviet Union. Marcet Haldeman-Julius once recalled the time Anna Louise came to Girard and enthusiastically reported on the greatness of Soviet Commissar Leon Trotsky. [58] Margaret Sanger wrote Little Blue Books on sex education. Upton Sinclair, author of 10 volumes of the books, noted in his autobiography that the Haldeman-Julius six-part publication of *The Jungle* significantly contributed to the book's mass popularity. Will Durant wrote for the Kansas publisher. Years after the editor's death, Durant stated, "I owe Haldeman-Julius a great deal, for it was at his urging that I wrote the 'Story of Philosophy.' He was a generous spirit and a stimulating mind." [59] Little Blue Books included essays by Clarence Darrow, Luther Burbank, W.E.B. Du Bois, Havelock Ellis, Bertrand Russell, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and many others.

IN *The First Hundred Million* (1928), Haldeman-Julius examined Little Blue Book sales for the 12 months of 1927. Based on an analysis of 1,156 randomly selected orders representing sales of 25,000 Books, the publisher came to some interesting conclusions concerning Little Blue Book customers and their literary tastes. Although Haldeman-Julius did not indicate from what geographical areas the orders came, he noted that 70 percent of his readers were male, 30 percent female. The orders analyzed represented customers of all ages, with a majority in their 20's and 30's. [60] Significantly, Haldeman-Julius's estimates of annual sales for 1927 showed that the most popular Little Blue Books were those dealing with sex and love, including:

<i>Prostitution in the Modern World</i>	.....	129,500
<i>What Married Women Should Know</i>	.....	112,000
<i>What Married Men Should Know</i>	.....	97,500
<i>Woman's Sexual Life</i>	.....	97,000

<i>What Every Young Man Should Know</i>	.....	95,000
<i>What Every Young Woman Should Know</i>	.....	90,000
<i>Prostitution in the Ancient World</i>	.....	84,500
<i>Man's Sexual Life</i>	.....	78,500
<i>Prostitution in the Medieval World</i>	.....	73,000
<i>What Every Girl Should Know</i>	.....	66,000
<i>The Physiology of Sex Life</i>	.....	65,500
<i>Catholicism and Sex</i>	.....	65,000
<i>The Common Sense of Sex</i>	.....	63,000
<i>Freud on Sleep and Sexual Dreams</i>	.....	61,000
<i>The Art of Kissing</i>	.....	60,500
<i>Sex Life in Greece and Rome</i>	.....	56,000
<i>Homosexual Life</i>	.....	54,500
<i>How to Love</i>	.....	52,500
<i>Mistresses of Today</i>	.....	52,500
<i>Womanhood: Facts of Life for Women</i>	.....	52,500

[61]

Haldeman-Julius remarked, "American readers, it seems, are not afraid of sex. They recognize it is a fact, and they want to know more facts about it." [62] Yet the readers of Little Blue Books wanted knowledge on a variety of other topics as well. In the spirit of free thought, the agnostic publisher printed numerous Little Blue Books which treated religion favorably, such as:

<i>The Wisdom of Confucius</i>	.....	21,000
<i>The Essence of Buddhism</i>	.....	16,000
<i>The Essence of Catholicism</i>	.....	14,500
<i>The Essence of Judaism</i>	.....	12,000
<i>Life of Martin Luther</i>	.....	12,000
<i>Life of Jesus (Renan)</i>	.....	11,000
<i>Life of Mahomet</i>	.....	9,000
<i>Life of St. Francis of Assisi</i>	.....	8,000
<i>History of the Modern Church</i>	.....	8,000
<i>Bryan's Prince of Peace</i>	.....	7,000

[63]

Little Blue Books expressing antireligious sentiments were, however, considerably more popular:

Luther Burbank's <i>Why I am an Infidel</i>	.....	64,000
<i>Seven Infidel U.S. Presidents</i>	.....	43,000
<i>Did Jesus Ever Live?</i>	.....	42,500
<i>Horrors of the Inquisition</i>	.....	41,000
<i>The Degradation of Woman</i>	.....	35,000
<i>Self-Contradictions of the Bible</i>	.....	33,000
<i>Reasons for Doubting the Bible</i>	.....	31,000
<i>The Myth of the Resurrection</i>	.....	30,500
<i>Forgery of the Old Testament</i>	.....	30,000
Thomas Paine's <i>Age of Reason</i>	.....	29,000

[64]

In 1927 the Haldeman-Julius company sold an estimated 50,000 copies of the first volume in the Little Blue Book series, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam*. Other popular literary works included:

<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> (Stevenson)	.....	29,500
<i>The Man Without a Country</i> (Hale)	.....	27,500
<i>Voyage to the Moon</i> (Verne)	.....	19,000
<i>Autobiography of Cellini</i>	.....	18,500

<i>Confessions of an Opium-Eater</i> (DeQuincey)	.....	17,500
<i>Diary of Samuel Pepys</i>	.....	17,500
<i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> (Bunyan)	.....	17,000
<i>Aesop's Famous Fables</i>	.....	16,000
<i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i>	.....	14,500
<i>Andersen's Famous Fairy Tales</i>	.....	13,500

[65]

Haldeman-Julius published a variety of books on philosophy, such as:

<i>Story of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy</i>	.....	45,000
<i>Story of Plato's Philosophy</i>	.....	39,000
<i>Story of Anatole France and His Philosophy</i>	.....	32,000
<i>Story of Aristotle's Philosophy</i>	.....	27,000
<i>Story of Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy</i>	.....	26,500
<i>Story of Baruch Spinoza's Philosophy</i>	.....	25,500
<i>Story of Francis Bacon's Philosophy</i>	.....	25,500
<i>Story of Voltaire's Philosophy</i>	.....	24,000
<i>Story of Herbert Spencer's Philosophy</i>	.....	19,000

[66]

Biographies in the Little Blue Book series included:

Thomas Paine	.....	21,000
Oscar Wilde	.....	19,000
Napoleon Bonaparte	.....	17,500
Abraham Lincoln	.....	13,500
Leo Tolstoy	.....	12,000
Machiavelli	.....	7,000
Benjamin Disraeli	.....	6,500
Thomas Paine (A second biography)	.....	6,000
Michelangelo	.....	5,000
Frederick the Great	.....	4,000
Thomas Jefferson	.....	4,000

[67]

Comparing the Haldeman-Julius sales figures for the biographies of Paine and Jefferson, one book reviewer declared in November, 1928, "When the story of the immortal Jefferson is only one fifth as interesting to the plain common people as the life of a man whose chief claim to fame seems to be religious infidelity—well, it indicates parlous times for Democracy." [68]

On the subject of music, Haldeman-Julius printed *Facts You Should Know About Music* (37,000), *Old Favorite Negro Songs* (15,000), and *Great Christian Hymns* (3,000). Little Blue Books on language skills included *Common Faults in English* (47,000) and *Esperanto Self Taught* (17,000). The Haldeman-Julius company published a variety of "how-to" books, such as *How To Make All Kinds of Candy* [165/166] (45,000), *How To Psycho-Analyze Yourself* (43,000), and *How To Tie All Kinds of Knots* (27,500). Haldeman-Julius published cook books, joke books, essays on evolution, ghost stories, proverbs, and epigrams.

How did the publisher determine what works should be included in the Little Blue Book series? He once explained:

As editor and publisher, I've always known my public intimately—it's myself. I judge a manuscript by only one standard—do I like it? If I find it interesting and readable, I print it. I'm Mr. Public—E.H.J., multiplied hundreds of thousands of times. [69]

A list of Haldeman-Julius's favorite writers generally corresponded to the best sellers in the Little Blue Book series. The editor's books on agnosticism, reflecting many of his own skeptical views, far outsold those selections expressing religious belief. Haldeman-Julius admired the views of Thomas Paine, Abraham Lincoln, Voltaire, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Schopenhauer concerning the freedom of individuals from coercive authority. He believed "good" literature included the works of such writers as Boccaccio, Gautier, Maupassant, and Shakespeare.

The Kansas publisher wrote in 1928, "Whatever readers have expressed a desire for, I have given them—saving only what I consider trash." [70] He stated that even if the works of Cotton Mather would sell well, he would not include them in the Little Blue Book series. "I would not do 'anything for money,'" Haldeman-Julius once wrote. "I am glad that my profits have not come from the manufacture of munitions of war, for example. I am glad, in other words, that I have been able to use good business toward the improvement instead of the exploitation of the masses." [71] Reconsidering several profitable Little Blue Books on self-improvement which gave "a rosy glow to

the daily humdrum of life," the editor removed them from publication. Emphasizing that the publishing policy of the Haldeman-Julius company was "truth-telling, sham-smashing, and . . . debunking," he noted, "These books were liars. They played falsely upon the imagination." [72]

Haldeman-Julius declared in the early 1920's, "I am not selling complexions, nor am I selling sleep. I am trying to 'sell' the people on reading, on knowledge, on culture. It can be done." [73] If a Little Blue Book was not selling well, and the publisher personally considered it "good" literature, he often simply changed its title. "If by altering a title here and there a good book would be more widely read," he stated in 1928, "then the end certainly would justify the means." [74] Because he believed the American public was primarily interested in having fun, he found it advantageous to suggest "fun" in Little Blue Book titles. For example, when Guy de Maupassant's *The Tallow Ball* was selling only at a few thousand copies a year, Haldeman-Julius changed its title to *A French Prostitute's Sacrifice*, resulting in sales increases of over 50,000. Similarly, he changed Moliere's *The Bourgeois Gentleman* to *The Show-Off*, Gautier's *Fleece of Gold* to *The Quest for a Blonde Mistress*, Hugo's *The King Enjoys Himself* to *The Lustful King Enjoys Himself*, and Marcet Haldeman-Julius's *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About* to *Marcet Haldeman-Julius's Intimate Notes on Her Husband*. All of these title changes resulted in remarkable sales increases. Critics accused Haldeman-Julius of deceptive sales practices. He answered that he was merely trying to popularize what he viewed as good literature. Certainly some readers were deceived, but not always by Haldeman-Julius title changes. Consider the many devotees of the supernatural who bought Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* only to find that the play was about a young man dying of syphilis.

Commenting on the Haldeman-Julius practice of title-changing, a writer for the Kansas City *Star* observed in August, 1951, "False advertising? But, on the whole, these were books of considerable merit which probably would never have been ordered had the buyer known their content. And, as the pulp-story mind accepted the Harvard Classics, some knowledge had to rub off." [75] According to Kansas journalist Walter Green, "Many people in the 20's and 30's got a large part of their education from the Little Blue Books, and many a fellow in college used the E. H.-J. translation of the classics as 'ponies' to ride [166/167] along with Caesar, Virgil and Homer." [76] In fact, by the end of the 1920's the Little Blue Books bore the following slogan on their back covers: "Little Blue Books—A University in Print Read the World Over."

Yet it was oftentimes a university preaching what were frequently considered radical, if not downright immoral, causes. For those readers unsure of the publisher's own position on specific issues, Haldeman-Julius obliged by writing his own set of Little Blue Books. Like many of the volumes in the series, the Little Blue Books written by the editor protested against all forms of what he regarded as unreasonable authority. "Forms of compulsion are abhorrent to the liberal mind," he wrote in the spirit of John Stuart Mill in *What Is a Liberal?* (1930), "and they can only be tolerated on the grounds of absolute, plain necessity." [77] (Although Haldeman-Julius did not specifically refer to Mill in this Little Blue Book, the editor was nevertheless quite familiar with the British philosopher's views on personal freedom; the first Big Blue Book, published on August 18, 1925, was Mill's *On Liberty*.)

LIKE Friedrich Nietzsche, Haldeman-Julius believed that man's unquestioned obedience to Judeo-Christian authority had caused humanity much unhappiness. He wrote in 1925, "The Bible has done more harm to the human mind and character than all other vicious books combined." [78] In *The Age-Old Follies of Man* (1930), he declared:

We regularly hear it said that poverty, pain, misfortune and the like are manifestations of God's will; that the true Christian must bear such sufferings with fortitude and even with thankfulness; that God has mysterious purposes in view which it is not the business of man to question. If this is not superstition, what is it possibly to be called? It is grotesquely out of line with a civilized viewpoint. It has not a shadow of reason to dignify it. It is not even a bit of clever and entertaining error. It is sheer superstition, childish, ridiculous, primitive. [79]

In Haldeman-Julius's opinion, theology "takes our stupidity and tries to organize it into a system of thought, which is to multiply stupidity." [80] He believed the teachings of the Roman church were "utterly antagonistic to the great features of liberalism and humanism which set the modern age brilliantly above the Dark Ages when Catholic faith and dogma and power were supreme." [81] The publisher declared in *The Danger of Catholicism to the Public Schools* (1930):

"No surrender to intelligence" is the cry of the Roman Catholic Church to the modern world. "No return to ignorance and superstition, no compromise of modernism and medievalism," should be our repeated slogan and our repeated, intelligent inspiration to a full program of truth-telling in reply to the lying claims and pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church." [82]

Although Nietzsche despised Judeo-Christian thought, he did not hate Christians and Jews. Similarly Haldeman-Julius, a bitter foe of Roman Catholicism, did not hate Catholics as people; two of his best friends in Girard were priests. While the publisher did not single out priests for ridicule, he mercilessly assailed Protestant "pulpit pounders" and "hidebound old sin-killers" whom he thought enriched themselves by shamelessly promoting intolerance, ignorance, superstition, unquestioned obedience to authority, and human unhappiness. He particularly relished debunking hypocritical evangelists, those "salesmen of salvation" who had "put pep into Saint Paul and jazzed Jesus." [83] In *Is "Knowledge" of God a Delusion?* (1931), the editor noted, "Our civilization is materialistic, says the preacher. He hastens to add that our materialistic civilization will crash unless he, the preacher, has a satisfactory share in this materialism." [84] The publisher thought Christian Scientists had "no rivals in the medieval style of spiritual magic." [85] Of Fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan, the editor stated, "No yokel could hate and fear an idea more fervently than Bryan." [86]

Haldeman-Julius's condemnation of Christianity was just one manifestation of his general hatred of intolerant and "unreasonable" authority. As a boy in Philadelphia, Emanuel Julius had been beaten up by Catholics for [167/168] being a "Christ-killer." At the age of 15, he left home, apparently to escape the authoritarian old-world traditions of his immigrant Jewish family. The rebellious Haldeman-Julius fought "unreasonable" authority because it had caused him great personal unhappiness. He believed that religious authority had similarly caused mankind misery. As the Kansas publisher declared in 1931:

We attack religion because religion is not true—because religion is an obstacle (or set of obstacles) in the way of progress—because religion is the breeding ground of intolerance—because, in short, religion is essentially hostile to mankind. [87]

It is important to understand Haldeman-Julius's views on the evils of religious authority, for he thought that religious intolerance was responsible for many of America's ills. The Girard publisher claimed that religious sanctions against divorce and birth control made numerous American lives needlessly unhappy. The Roman church's prohibition against contraceptives was, he maintained, oppressive to those Catholic women who wanted to limit family size, or who did not want any children at all. "The Pope is qualified to tell the modern world nothing," Haldeman-Julius wrote in 1930, "and he is qualified to tell us less than nothing about sex." [88]

THE KANSAS editor believed that Americans trapped by unhappy marriages should seek divorces, an extremely controversial position in the 1920's. In fact, he and his wife Marcet even persuaded several unhappy Girard couples to get divorces. Certainly, neither one of the Haldeman-Juliuses glorified traditional matrimony. The editor dubbed it "double entry bookkeeping." [89] His wife, moreover, scandalized Kansas as well as the rest of the country by advocating "companionate marriage." Marcet believed that American society, by approving of sexual relations only within the bounds of traditional marriage, unfairly denied young people what she and her husband believed was their right to sexual experience. Furthermore, she thought that numerous laws denying young Americans access to contraceptive devices made their lives miserable. While admitting that many young people were not yet ready to assume the responsibilities of family life, Marcet affirmed that they were nevertheless biologically and emotionally prepared for a sexual relationship.

Marcet did not advocate "free love," but rather "companionate marriage" as a means of liberating America's youth from oppressive sexual restrictions. She noted that a companionate marriage was a legal union "the object of which is sexual and social companionship." [90] The success of the marriage was based in large part on a companionate couple's effective use of birth control. If a child were born, however, Marcet stressed that the companionate marriage would automatically become a traditional "family marriage."

Denver Juvenile Court judge Ben B. Lindsey had stated that "a union childless by agreement until compatibility is proved, is a companionate marriage. So long as there are no children and the couple mutually desire a divorce, they may obtain it on simple declaration. It is not a trial marriage, which involves no ceremony." [91] In a companionate marriage, Marcet pointed out, neither spouse assumed full financial responsibility; each was "independent" in marriage. If they were college students, they could continue to receive support from their parents until the time of graduation. Should a couple decide to dissolve their companionate marriage by divorce, the husband would not be penalized with alimony payments as punishment "for the mutual mistake of his wife and himself." [92]

On November 27, 1927, Unitarian Minister L. M. Birkhead presided at the companionate marriage of Marcet's foster daughter Josephine to Kansas University student Aubrey Roselle. Josephine told a news reporter at the time of the ceremony that she and her new husband planned to practice birth control and maintain financial independence of each other. [93]

The companionate marriage issue became a *cause célèbre*, and although its main proponent was Marcet Haldeman-Julius, her husband's enemies did not hesitate to capitalize on it. Fearing that the Girard publisher might run [168/169]

[Photo of Emanuel & Marcet Haldeman-Julius appears above the following caption:]

When Emanuel Julius (1889-1951) and Anna Marcet Haldeman (1888-1941) were married in 1916, they hyphenated their surnames. Marcet was a "modern woman" who believed in female equality, and combining their names was an acknowledgment of their full partnership. Photograph reproduced from the Kansas City *Post*, August 22, 1927.

for either lieutenant governor or United States senator in the general election of 1930, and dreading the radical effect he would undoubtedly have on state politics, a group of five Kansas newspaper editors, including William Allen White, sought to discredit Haldeman-Julius through widespread news coverage of his foster daughter's companionate marriage. Consequently, reports of Josephine's wedding appeared on the front pages of Kansas newspapers, as well as those in New York, San Francisco, and other major American cities. [94] The publicity did succeed in arousing some public indignation. Rev. John W. Bradbury of Kansas City's Bales Baptist church declared at the time of Josephine's wedding, "I regard such men as Ben B. Lindsey, E. Haldeman-Julius and the Rev. L. M. Birkhead as fostering a human relationship unsanctioned by God and infamously degrading to the participants." [95]

Institutional religion had good cause to condemn the Haldeman-Juliuses, as the publisher and his wife continually opposed those restrictive American laws which they thought were examples of "intolerant Christian legislation." Both advocated the repeal of laws which denied Americans sex education. Marcet asked her readers in 1927, "Do you realize that at the present it is a crime in America for a mother to write a letter telling her daughter how to postpone the advent of her first child?" [96] United States postal laws declared that any American mailing an "article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for preventing conception or producing abortion" would, upon conviction, "be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than five years, or both." [97] Commenting on the laws denying women access to any specific information on birth control Marcet stated:

What puzzles me is why the laws against contraceptive information are allowed to stand. For usually women get whatever they make up their minds they are entitled to have. And if there is anything a woman has a right to demand surely it is information which is strictly her own personal concern and about her own body. [98]

In order to satisfy American postal authorities, Haldeman-Julius had to be extremely cautious that Little Blue Book titles were not "obscene, lewd, lascivious, or filthy." [99] As Marcet noted, American laws prevented him from publishing explicit information on contraception. Certainly, the Girard editor had numerous problems with censors. In the 1920's, the Canadian government, considering many of the Little Blue Books on sexual topics to be "disguised obscenity," refused to allow their importation into the country. In

response to critics who claimed that Little Blue Books would have a corrupting influence on the sexual attitudes of American Womanhood, Haldeman-Julius quoted New York Mayor Jimmy Walker's view, "Did you ever know a woman [169/170] who was ruined by a book?" [100] As for the literary expertise of censors, those guardians of public morality, Haldeman-Julius remarked, "To offer literature to their judgment is to cast pearls before swine." [101] Yet the Kansas publisher predicted in 1928:

American readers are thorough in their quest for knowledge. I have demonstrated that. They place no taboos of their own on anything which may inform them, or help them to understand the world and themselves. One of these days Mr. Average Man may resent being deprived of a book he wants to read, just because some self-styled Superior Man says it won't be good for him. When that time comes, the desire for knowledge will at last have its way: Its full, undenied, unhindered way. [102]

IN 1927 Haldeman-Julius joined Clarence Darrow, Sinclair Lewis, and others in condemning the many "blue laws" which existed throughout the United States. The Kansas publisher thought the legal prohibition of such activities as Sunday baseball and Sunday motion picture shows was an excellent case of "intolerant Christian legislation." Viewing the "ordeal of Prohibition" in the same manner, he declared in 1931:

The law is a product of moral and religious intolerance; it is one of the most brazen and pernicious examples of tyranny ever contrived by a political machine in any age. Prohibition has made farcical, false play on the notion of democracy. [103]

Emanuel Haldeman-Julius took great pains to ridicule those many legal restrictions which, like prohibition, represented "unreasonable" authority. In his Little Blue Book entitled *Facing Life Realistically* (1931), the publisher cited numerous examples: in Buffalo, N.Y., it was illegal for a patron to keep a milk bottle for more than 24 hours; in Minnesota, it was illegal for couples to dance in dimly lit public halls; in Corvallis, Ore., it was illegal for young women to drink coffee at evening meals, except on Friday and Saturday; and in Michigan, it was illegal for a girl to wear a fraternity pin. [104]

ONE COULD be easily amused by the editor's list of "stupid laws." Many people, however, did not appreciate his stinging con-

[Photo appears above caption below.]

Haldeman-Julius believed in well informed men and opposed those who sought to stifle freedom of speech and the press. At the time of his death in July, 1951, the Haldeman-Julius Co. published at its Girard print shop more titles and volumes than any other company in the world. [170/171]

demnations of the legal and social sanctions directed against the American Negro. "There is no mystery about the prejudice and injustice that usually distorts all reference to the Negro," he declared in 1928. "As an issue of right, and as an issue of expediency, the only sensible attitude toward the Negro is a fair and human and kindly attitude. Discrimination is indefensible." [105]

Haldeman-Julius was one of the first publishers to print an anthology of American Negro poetry. [106] He corresponded with W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, and discussed their views on civil rights before black church congregations in Kansas City and nearby Pittsburg. What did he see as the final solution to America's race problem? He suggested in 1928:

I am coming to believe that the only way to settle this Negro question is by the gradual process of amalgamation; let the colors merge to form a new race. We see already that the lighter the skin, the lighter the prejudice. [107]

The Girard publisher's position on the race issue was especially courageous in view of the power of the Ku Klux Klan, an organization which, by the mid-1920's, exerted considerable influence not only in Crawford county, but throughout the state of Kansas. By 1923 Kansas Klansmen were chanting such lines as.

I would rather be a Ku Klux Klan with a robe of snowy white,
Than to be a Roman Catholic with a robe as black as night,
A KKK is American, America is his home,
While a Catholic owes allegiance to a Dago pope in Rome. [108]

In 1924 both Republican and Democratic nominees for governor enjoyed Klan support; the mayor of Emporia, home of William Allen White, was a Klan member. Editor White, protesting Klan influence in the 1924 gubernatorial election, ran unsuccessfully as an independent candidate for governor. Announcing his candidacy on September 20, 1924, he declared:

The issue in Kansas this year is the Ku Klux Klan above everything else. It is found in nearly every county. It represents a small minority of the citizenship and it is organized for purposes of terror, directed at honest law-abiding citizens; Negroes, Jews, and Catholics. These

[Photo appears above caption below.]

Clerical workers at the Girard print shop processed mail orders for Little Blue Books which by 1928 were coming into the company at a summer average of 2,500 a day, a winter average of 4,000. Contemporaries called Haldeman-Julius the "Henry Ford of Publishing." [171/172]

groups in Kansas comprise more than one-fourth of our population. They menace no one. Yet, because of their skin, their race, or their creed, the Ku Klux Klan is subjecting them to economic boycott, to social ostracism, to every form of harassment, annoyance and terror that a bigoted minority can use. [109]

Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, viewing the Klan as "a jazzing-up of the very old bunk of racial animosity and patriotism," [110] wrote from Girard that same year:

Never in American history has anything been known to even compare with the present black wave of bigotry and reaction, personified so completely by the Ku Klux Klan. . . . The ignorance of the masses makes it almost easy for the power of religious hatred to "sell" the idea of dissension and lawlessness. . . . Bigotry will grow just so long as there is man's mass ignorance to heed these hoodlums, and as there is a vast amount of it one shudders at the prospect. [111]

Catholic John McPike Keresey stated at the time in one of the Haldeman-Julius Little Blue Books:

Catholics, as citizens, condemn the Klan, as they would condemn any other corrupt, lawless, disloyal and disintegrating influence in American life. The murder of Father Coyle at Birmingham, Alabama, the burning of churches, the raiding of homes, and the whipping of defenseless men and women—such acts passing unpunished, create anxiety in our minds regarding the integrity of those who administer the affairs of the incriminated States. [112]

Commenting on the Klan's orgy of religious persecution and racial brutality, Haldeman-Julius wrote in 1923:

We are a barbarous people. We send missionaries to the "heathen"—harmless, gentle foreigners who are better off without us. And at home we burn Negroes at the stake, hound Catholics and Jews through bigoted and sadistic Ku Klux Klans, fan into flame hatred and dissension, and then cover it all with the solemn avowal that we are a Christian nation. We are not! We are a barbarous people. [113]

On May 4, 1927, Arkansas Negro John Carter was lynched for striking two white farm women. After hanging Carter in a rural field, a mob riddled the body with some 300 bullets, jubilantly dragged it in broad daylight through the streets of Little Rock, soaked the disfigured corpse with gasoline, and finally burned it on a city street. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, reporting on the incident in *The Story of a Lynching* (1927), was candidly told by one Little Rock citizen, "When a nigger goes to Chicago or Kansas and comes back you have to kill him." . . . When you want to describe a bad nigger down here, you call him a 'Kansas' nigger." [114]

Not surprisingly, the Klan little appreciated the Girard editor's published condemnations of the Invisible Empire. The publisher received several anonymous threats on his life, although he was not harmed. Nevertheless, Haldeman-Julius refused to remove *K. K. K.: The Creed of the Klansmen* (1924) from publication. In the spring of 1951, J. Edgar Hoover came to Girard and similarly demanded that Haldeman-Julius cease publication of a Big Blue Book entitled *The F. B. I.—The Basis of an American Police State: The Alarming Methods of J. Edgar Hoover* (1948). Once again, the Kansas editor refused to submit to intimidation." [115]

A PACIFIST throughout his life, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius hoped that his Little Blue Books would not only combat the mass ignorance which he considered characteristic of American society, but he thought they might at the same time encourage Americans to deal with social problems by means of reason rather than violence. "Ignorant people are more likely to give rein to their violent impulses than are intelligent people," he once stated." [116] The Girard editor, son of a Jewish family that had immigrated to America to escape the violence of the pogroms, who himself had physically suffered at the hands of religious intolerance, thought that violence caused only suffering. He termed capital punishment "an ignorant, cruel, futile, antiquated method of dealing with the crime of murder." [117] He condemned the brutality of American prisons, and said of the guards employed by the Georgia prison system, "The rank and file of prison guards is composed of illiterate yokels who have received their ethical training from captains in the Ku Klux Klan. There is not one guard among the fraternity who could pass an intelligence test prepared for kindergarten pupils." [118] He advocated disarmament in international affairs, believing that "disarmed nations will not fight; for when they have really [172/173] disarmed, they will have renounced utterly and unreservedly the very idea of fighting as a means of settling any question." [119] Haldeman-Julius even suggested that America's independence from the British Crown might have been achieved by peaceful means, noting,

. . . who can deny that, perhaps more slowly, independence could have been secured by peaceful political development, responding to the natural growth of the country and the need of adjusting old arrangements to new issues? Is Canada, for example, essentially less free than the United States? [120]

WHILE it is true that Haldeman-Julius continually condemned what he regarded as the ignorance and irrationality of American society, it is also true that he frequently did so by employing his own kind of ignorance and irrationality. One journalist has said of the Girard publisher that "in his own publications, he fought bunk, sham and baloney with his own particular brand of baloney, bunk and sham." [121] Although Haldeman-Julius repudiated "bunkist" appeals characterized by violent emotionalism, he himself could resort to virulent name-calling, particularly when discussing Catholicism and fascism. Indeed, he believed they were one and the same; German National Socialism and the "Mussolini-Pope regime" [122] were, in his mind, firmly rooted in Roman Catholic intolerance and persecution. In view of the publisher's own painful experience with Catholic persecution, one can at least partially understand why he so often fought religious bigotry with his own antireligious intolerance. Yet did his Little Blue Books which so hatefully attacked Roman Catholicism in any way contribute to a general hatred of Catholics? Haldeman-Julius could despise a philosophy without necessarily hating its adherents, yet could all his readers do the same?

In *Is Adolf Hitler a Maniac?* (1930), Haldeman-Julius distorted truth and reported hearsay information as fact. He declared that the whole of Germany was suffering under Hitler's rule, and that most Nazis were homosexuals. Although the publisher was a pacifist, he suggested that violent means might be necessary to remove Hitler from power. The editor's characterizations of prominent Americans

were frequently unfair, as when he portrayed Herbert Hoover as a deceitful capitalist totally insensitive to the sufferings of America's unemployed. His judgments were sometimes puzzling, as when he condemned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on the grounds that "it pretended to be social and uplifting while in fact it was strictly political." [123] Although he fought against racial hatred, he published a Little Blue Book of jokes about American Negroes which characterized them as both wise and stupid. He did not see this as harmful, noting in 1928, "A sense of humor will save many a serious situation from disaster. Then, too, the desire to laugh at ourselves is healthy—it will keep us sane, and at the same time promote the sum total of human happiness." [124]

In 1919 Emanuel Haldeman-Julius had launched a crusade for enlightenment, freedom, and human happiness. He had declared war on Babbitts and bunk, and some of the most prominent social critics in America had rallied to his call. Many were themselves authors of Little Blue Books. During the 1920's, the Haldeman-Julius farm became something of a national cultural retreat, hosting such personalities as painter Abraham Walkowitz, Clarence Darrow, Anna Louise Strong, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., opera singers Lawrence Tibbett and Enrico Caruso, and Jane Addams.

IN 1933 Marcet Haldeman-Julius sued her husband for separate maintenance, claiming he had refused "to supply her funds for household expenses." [125] Although the suit was granted, the couple still lived in the same house for the next eight years. Marcet died in 1941, and the following year Haldeman-Julius married his secretary, Sue Haney. On April 18, 1951, the Girard publisher was found guilty of federal income tax evasion. Defense Attorney Douglas Hudson stated that his client was a self-educated man having little experience in bookkeeping. [126] Haldeman-Julius himself [173/174] claimed that he had "only made honest mistakes." [127]

The publisher was given a \$12,500 fine, six months in prison, and three years probation. Yet he was unable to serve the sentence, as he drowned in his swimming pool on July 31, 1951. The coroner ruled the death accidental.

Marcet Haldeman-Julius once said that of all the literary figures in history, she thought her husband was most like Voltaire. In his Little Blue Books, the Kansas publisher continually spoke out against bigotry, violence, and human suffering. Haldeman-Julius strongly believed in the freedom of individuals, regardless of their color, creed, or sex. People had always sought personal freedom, he maintained, because human beings were happiest when they were free.

According to the publisher's second wife Sue, "Emanuel loved life and he loved people—all kinds of people, from his celebrated friends right down to the big red-faced milkman who trudged by our farm daily." [128] Haldeman-Julius was active in the Girard Chamber of Commerce, the founder of the Girard Kiwanis Club, and a member of the Knife and Fork Club. He helped Girard Italians pass their naturalization tests by tutoring them in English, and frequently welcomed visiting college students to his home with the greeting, "How nice of you to come!" [129] Asked in later years why he enjoyed life, the Kansas publisher replied:

I find life worth living, because I enjoy good music, great books, beautiful thoughts of truth and freedom, pleasant home life, exchange of ideas, masterpieces left by the world's greatest thinkers . . . black bread smeared with homemade butter, magnificent orchestras, letters dictated by my grandchild . . . honest, friendly neighbors, brand new calves, newly plowed ground, burning logs that make the house smell sweet, my wife's lovely garden, the fields mantled in snow, soft-voiced old people, laughing children . . . the long yawn that says it's time to turn in. [130]

At the time Emanuel Haldeman-Julius [174/175] moved to Girard, in 1915, there were many critics who viewed the American intellectual scene with despair. Haldeman-Julius, nevertheless, remained optimistic, regarding the provincialism, religious hatred, and racial brutality of American life as passing phenomena. They were not here to stay, the Kansas publisher believed, because he did not think the American people really desired that kind of society. While Haldeman-Julius did believe that the majority of Americans were ignorant and that many of them were aggressively bigoted, he remained convinced that this was a consequence of circumstance rather than choice. And he hoped that his Little Blue Books, the "Democracy in Books," would give all Americans, especially the poor, the opportunity for the kind of educational self-improvement that would one day enable them to enjoy fuller lives of individual freedom and personal happiness. "Freedom was an especially important word to him all his life, and the Constitution was his bible," the editor's second wife recalled years after his death. "He believed a well-informed man was an asset to his country and valiantly opposed those who would seek to stifle freedom of speech. . . ." [131] Haldeman-Julius asked his readers as early as 1923, "Should workmen who delight in *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, the poetry of Keats, the plays of Shakespeare, the essays of Schopenhauer, Bacon and Emerson, inspire fear of the part they may play in the future of society?" [132]

Although the Kansas publisher thought American society was plagued by Babbitts and bunk, he never doubted there were many Americans who genuinely wanted to expand

[Photo of several Haldeman-Julius publications spans the bottom of pp. 174-175.
Caption below appears above portion of photo on p. 175.]

More than 500,000,000 Little Blue Books in over 6,000 different titles were printed by the Haldeman-Julius Press between 1919 and 1951. One popular category was self-improvement; other subjects in demand were literature, political philosophy, and sex education. Haldeman-Julius also published the socialist newspaper, the *Appeal to Reason*, and other periodicals which he advertised on the back covers of some of the books. Other covers carried a line drawing of the publisher and the logo, "Little Blue Books—A University in Print Read the World Over." [175/176]

their minds. Believing that knowledge was the key to happiness, he earnestly hoped his Little Blue Books would not only provide mass enlightenment, but they would also inspire the person whom he affectionately called the "young American scholar." The editor had faith that this young scholar, once discovered, would one day continue his war against hatred, intolerance, and human misery.

Emanuel Haldeman-Julius was confident of this when he wrote from Girard in 1928:

Somewhere in America this young man is—perhaps waiting and longing for this opportunity. He may be a young Jew on the East Side in New York City. He may be a young Negro in Harlem. He may be a farm boy in Kansas or Minnesota. Or this young scholar may be a girl. . . . And neither sex nor race will bar the right person from this opportunity. He is waiting somewhere—this young scholar. He will hear and recognize my call. For this call will not only be spoken—it will be published—and it will go throughout the country. I have confidence that it will not fail to reach the one for whom it is intended. Surely, in this great, lively, ambitious America there is such a potential scholar. Somewhere he will be found. Now unknown, he shall be greatly known. [133]

[Notes]

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
5. Letter dated February 24, 1969, from Col. Frank Borman to Norman Tanis.
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7. E. Haldeman-Julius, *America: The Greatest Show on Earth* (Girard, Haldeman-Julius Company, 1928), p. 38.
8. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About* (Girard, Haldeman-Julius Company, 1924), p. 22.
9. E. Haldeman-Julius, *The World of Haldeman-Julius* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1960), p. 38.
10. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About*, p. 20.
11. Haldeman-Julius, *The World of Haldeman-Julius*, p. 39.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Walter Green, "Haldeman-Julius Was Newsman at 17," *Topeka Sunday Capital-Journal*, March 22, 1959, p. 23A.
15. Anderson, "Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," p. 22.
16. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About*, p. 23.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Green, "*Haldeman-Julius Was Newsman*," p. 23A.
19. E. Haldeman-Julius, *The World of Haldeman-Julius*, p. 38.
20. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About*, p. 22.
21. Mr. and Mrs. Haldeman-Julius, *Dust* (New York, Brentano's 1921), pp. 186-187.
22. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife is Thinking About*, p. 18.
23. Green, "Haldeman-Julius Was Newsman," p. 23A.
24. Author's interview of September 28, 1976, with Gene DeGruson, curator of the "Haldeman-Julius Collection," Porter Library, Kansas State College of Pittsburg, now Pittsburg State University.
25. Walter Green, "Young Haldeman-Julius Got Early Start on Socialism," *Topeka Sunday Capital-Journal*, March 29, 1959, p. 13A.
26. Letter dated December 3, 1976, from Gene DeGruson to the author.
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31. E. Haldeman-Julius, *America: The Greatest Show*, p. 23.
32. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *What the Editor's Wife Is Thinking About*, p. 27.
33. DeGruson notes that a letter from Jane Addams now in the "S. A. Haldeman-Julius Collection," Lilly Library, Indiana University, is specific evidence that she wanted her niece's surname hyphenated.
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44. E. Haldeman-Julius, *America's Fakirs*, p. 37.
45. E. Haldeman-Julius, *Facing Life Realistically*, p. 22.
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47. E. Haldeman-Julius, *Facing Life Realistically*, p. 24.
48. Quotation on Harding and Coolidge from E. Haldeman-Julius, *Herbert Hoover*, p 3; on Henry Ford and Will Rogers from E. H.-J., *America's Fakirs*, p. 30, 32; on William Jennings Bryan from E. H.-J., *A Book of Persons*, p. 64; on Carl Sandburg from Walter Green, "Young Haldeman-Julius Got an Early Start on Socialism," p. 13A; on Pope Pius XI from E. H.-J., *The Danger of Catholicism to the Public Schools* (Girard, Haldeman-Julius Company, 1930), p. 35; on Adolf Hitler from E. H.-J., *Is Adolf Hitler a Maniac?* (Girard, Haldeman-Julius Company, 1930), p. 35; and on Harry Truman from E. H.-J., *Notes and Comments*, p. 26.
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104. E. Haldeman-Julius, *Facing Life Realistically*, p. 18.
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[The cover of this issue of *Kansas History* portrays the cover of a Haldeman-Julius publication.]

TEN CENT POCKET SERIES NO. 14
 Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

**What Every Girl
 Should Know**

Margaret H. Sanger

HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY
GIRARD, KANSAS

[*On the inside cover of this issue*]

THE COVER

The front cover of one of the Little Blue Books published by the Haldeman-Julius Company, Girard, from 1919 to 1951. More than 500,000,000 of the small volumes were printed in over 6,000 different titles. *See the article on the Little Blue Books on pages 155-176.*

SOURCE: Scott, Mark. 1978. "The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk," *Kansas History*, vol. 1, no. 3, Autumn 1978, pp. 155-76.

Note: The original format of this article was in two columns, with the title capitalized. The footnotes have been converted into endnotes. The photo images on my copy were of too degraded quality to include here. Captions are included, along with notes in brackets indicating the missing photos.

[The Village Atheist \(Excerpts\)](#) by E. Haldeman-Julius

["Haldeman-Julius, The Little Blue Books, and the Theory of Popular Culture"](#) by Dale M. Herder

["The Little Blue Books as Popular Culture: E. Haldeman-Julius' Methodology"](#) by Dale M. Herder

[Emanuel & Marcet Haldeman-Julius: Guide to Web Resources & Bibliography](#)

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The travels Mark Twain recounts in the book began in 1867 on the chartered vessel Quaker City, which took him and a group of his countrymen through Europe and the Holy Land, an itinerary including a stop at the 1867 Paris Exhibition and journeys through the Papal States to Rome and through the Black Sea to Odessa, all followable on a hypertext map. "In his account Mark Twain assumes two alternate roles," says the Library of America, "at times the no-nonsense American who refuses to automatically venerate the famous sights of the Old World (preferring Lake Tahoe to Lake Como), or at times the put-upon simpleton, a gullible victim of flatterers and 'frauds,' and an awe-struck admirer of Russian royalty." "The Little Blue Book Man and the Big American Parade" (diss., Univ. of Maryland, 1966). Davenport, Tim. "The Appeal to Reason: Forerunner of Haldeman-Julius Publications", Big Blue Newsletter no. 3 (2004). "The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk." *Kansas History*, vol. 1.3 (Fall 1978), pp. 155-176. Victor, Jane.